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ABSTRACT

Based on the experiences of six organizations, this manual aims to help assistance groups who work to change the way schools actually treat children. Assistance group members can include principal or teacher advisors, curriculum consultants, group process facilitators, dissemination or staff development specialists, parent trainers or organizers, and child advocates. The organizations studied were AFRAM Associates, Center for New Schools, Creative Teaching Workshop, Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/), Rural Education Program, and United Bronx Parents. The manual's introduction describes the arrangement and use of the document, while the first section discusses general patterns that occur in all aspects of building effective assistance groups, such as time management, firmness or flexibility in pursuing goals, and awareness of how human systems work. Each of the next seven sections covers an area of assistance group activity (that is, a "puzzle"), discussing from 6 to 22 critical tasks (or "puzzle pieces") in assistance activities and providing exercises for rating oneself on the tasks and for finding ways to improve task performance. The seven activities include forming the assistance group, leading and managing it, refining school improvement strategies, developing the advisor's role, building client relationships, providing assistance, and raising funds. (Author/RW)

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Helping Schools Change

EA 015 301

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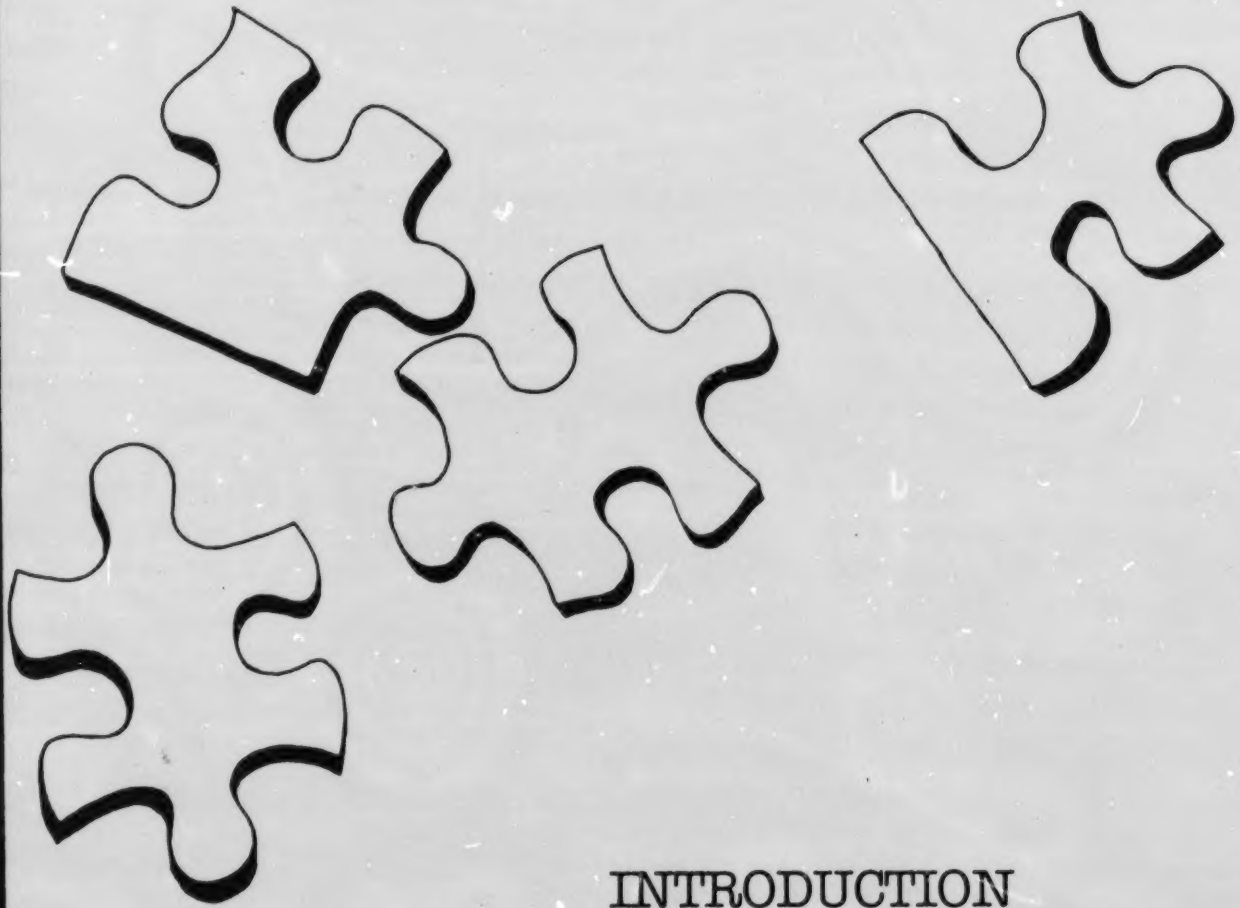


INTRODUCTION

What This Handbook Is About and How to Use It

Teacher advisor Valarie James convinces a workshop full of elementary school teachers to make a toy bird from a coat hanger, to balance the bird on a pop bottle, and to analyze what happens when you change the bird's shape. Several teachers are initially hostile, but they gradually become absorbed in experimentation. "This isn't just a make-it-and-take-it workshop," Valarie later explained. "I'm trying to help teachers discover something about their own learning style and fears about learning. As I work with them over a period of months, I'll keep bringing them back to reflect on this experience."

A group of school principals has come together to share concerns. Gradually, Tony Dellasandro, the group's advisor, guides the conversation away from lunchroom schedules and playground supervision to some touchier subjects. "The pressure is just too great for me," one principal remarks quietly. "Last night at 5 p.m., I wasn't going to come back to school this morning." "A principal," added another, "is a person who knows nothing but must pretend he knows everything. Any question I ask is seen as a sign of incompetence."

Bill Grady, a parent advisor, sits in a parent meeting in Arkansas that is being held in one parent's living room. "We always like to meet with parents in their homes at first, not in the school," Bill explains, "because parents have more confidence when they're on their own ground."

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ASSISTANCE GROUPS

In each of these situations, experienced advisors are working to make schools change. Each advisor is part of an assistance group -- that is, a group that helps teachers, principals, parents, or some combination of these client groups bring about changes in local schools. (Definitions of "assistance group" and other key terms appear on the next page.)

The assistance group fixes on some goals for improving the schools and develops carefully thought-out methods for pursuing those goals. When Valarie James responds to a teacher's hostile question, or Bill Grady insists that the parent meeting take place in someone's living room, they draw on strategies for improving the schools carefully developed by their respective assistance groups.

This handbook was written to help other assistance groups profit from the experience of several groups we studied that had had some substantial success. It is a practical manual for assistance groups who work to change the way local schools actually treat children day-to-day.

There's a lot to be learned from the experience of effective groups. If you are a principal advisor, teacher advisor, curriculum consultant, staff development specialist, group process facilitator, dissemination specialist, parent trainer, parent organizer,

KEY TERMS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK

advisors The members of the assistance group who carry out the direct assistance, working face-to-face with clients.

assistance group A group that is based inside or outside a local school district whose major purpose is to provide direct assistance.

assistance group leadership The top leader or leaders of an assistance group who bear major responsibility for leading the organization as a whole.

clients and client groups The individuals and groups who receive direct assistance -- school principals, teachers, parents, or some combination.

critical task A task identified by our research as crucial to the effectiveness of the assistance group.

direct, face-to-face, or on-site assistance Assistance to teachers, principals, and/or parents to bring about changes in the way specific local schools treat children. The help is provided primarily through contact with the teachers, principals, or parents over a period of several years.

human system or social system The network of formal and informal responsibilities, rules, understandings, expectations, etc., that bind people together in an organization -- including schools, school districts, and assistance groups.

school community A particular school, including its staff, plus the students, parents, school district departments, independent organizations, social agencies, and everyone else who has a stake in the operation of this school.

school improvement strategy An assistance group's overall plan for improving the schools, which specifies what is wrong, how school communities can be changed to address these problems, and what the assistance group should do to bring about these changes.

child advocate, or anyone else who works as part of an assistance group, we think you can become more effective if you actively analyze your daily activities along the lines we suggest in the chapters that follow.

HOW WE GOT HERE

By what right do we give this advice?

In the early 1970s, we began to recognize what many others were coming to understand at the same time: all the new money, new programs, and new laws that were supposed to improve public education weren't having much effect on local schools. Life in schools and classrooms was going on pretty much as it always had. A school superintendent expressed the problem well when she said, "If it didn't happen with the kids, it didn't happen." Much of the time it didn't.

We began to look around for places where it was "happening with the kids," especially with kids whom many had given up on: poor, black, and Hispanic children. We found inner-city schools where students had above-average reading skills, schools in the South Bronx where Puerto Rican children and their families were treated with great respect, an all-black school in Dayton where teams of teachers had developed an individualized program sparkling with creativity and excitement. We believed we saw some reasons why these schools were so different.

One thing we found frequently was that a group of advisors had played a role in encouraging these changes. They had worked directly with school staff or parents for several years to help give them the commitment, knowledge, and skills needed to turn the schools around.

We wanted to help other groups who were providing this type of assistance or who were planning to. So we decided to study experienced assistance groups who had had some striking successes. After a national search, we picked six groups to study, which are described on pages 6 to 9.

The groups we studied varied in dozens of ways. Some worked with teachers, some with principals, some with parents, some with a combination. They worked in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Their educational and political philosophies differed. They drew on a spectrum of methods, including formal workshops, teaching by example, and over-the-shoulder assistance. They produced extensive written and audio-visual material to aid their work.

What they had in common was that they were all trying to bring about substantial changes in specific local schools by working on-site with client groups for several years.

We spent about six weeks gathering information about the work of each group.

GROUPS WE STUDIED

group AFRAM Associates
Harlem, New York

main client groups AFRAM assisted low-income parent groups whose children were enrolled in federal Follow-Through programs in eight cities in the eastern United States. Their major focus was on black families, but they sometimes worked with other low-income and minority families.

focus of assistance AFRAM sought to help parents gain the confidence and skills to become involved in deciding what types of educational programs their children needed and in carrying these programs out. They wanted to reassert the central role of the family in shaping education. Ideally, this meant confident, informed parents serving on governing boards, and parents as co-teachers in the classroom.

Nationally, AFRAM wanted to build a parents' political movement to work together for these objectives.

some key methods AFRAM hired active parents at each site to encourage other parents to become involved. "Field consultants" visited sites regularly and met with parents to encourage them and help them plan. AFRAM kept up a steady stream of short written communications to local sites. Parents from all sites met once a year at a national Family Conference.

group Center for New Schools (CNS)
Chicago, Illinois

main client groups CNS advisors worked with both school staff and parents who were actively attempting to change urban (mainly Chicago) schools.

focus of assistance CNS tried a variety of strategies for encouraging active parent involvement in urban schools and for helping school staff to carry out programs more responsive to urban students.

They helped plan alternative schools, advised active parent groups, and in one project tried to involve both parents and school staff in identifying and solving school problems.

some key methods CNS studied effective school programs and effective parent involvement and used information drawn from successful programs to help others in similar situations.

They gave advice and technical support in formal and informal meetings while the groups they were helping planned and carried out activities.

group **Creative Teaching Workshop (CTW)**
New York, New York

main client groups: CTW advisors initially helped teachers in several New York public schools incorporate "experiential education" into their school's learning program. Having learned from this effort that the school principal was key in encouraging or blocking change, they began an advisory program for principals with the same focus.

focus of assistance: CTW aimed to develop a model for learning for both children and adults that had direct experience as its base -- especially experience in working with tangible materials like clay, paints, balance beams. CTW strove to make such experiences more than gimmicks -- to incorporate them into a systematic approach to learning.

some key methods: CTW collaborated with teachers on classroom learning projects, perhaps helping students build a rabbit cage and then working with the teacher to "extend" related possibilities for learning into all subject areas. With principals, the advisors might suggest they keep track of their time for a week to see how their stated priorities matched the way they spent their time. CTW advisors sought to "break through" with both principals and teachers by involving them in clay modeling, building classroom equipment, etc., to help them understand their own learning style.

group **Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/)**
Dayton, Ohio

main client groups: /I/D/E/A/ began by advising principals and teachers in 40 public elementary schools who wanted to "individualize education." Building on this experience, they began to train additional advisors from such agencies as state departments of education and universities to help local schools carry out the strategy /I/D/E/A/ had developed for individualizing education. At the time of the study, 1,400 schools had adopted its plan for individualization.

focus of assistance: The focus of /I/D/E/A/'s Individually Guided Education (IGE) was very explicit: learning was to be individualized and involve a careful cycle of assessment, planning, and instruction. The school was to be divided into learning communities of 100 to 150 students taught by a team of three to five teachers and an aide. Teachers were to improve their own abilities by helping one

another, by consulting the /I/D/E/A/-trained advisor, and by participating in the activities of a "league" of IGE schools.

some key methods

Steps in carrying out the shift to IGE in a school were carefully prescribed. The advisor led workshops to allow the school staff to decide whether to adopt IGE. Help from the advisor, along with a series of carefully designed handbooks about important aspects of IGE (such as the principal's role), were key to /I/D/E/A/'s approach. Also very important was IGE's emphasis on "peer learning" among staff in each school and in the league of schools.

group

Rural Education Program (REP)

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Portland, Oregon

main client groups

REP advisors assisted school administrators, teachers, parents, and other citizens in rural communities to work together to identify and solve school problems. REP advisors originally worked directly in local communities in developing their strategy; later they trained staff from state and regional departments of education to be problem-solving advisors in local school districts.

focus of assistance

REP worked to broaden participation in school decision making by giving educators and citizens the skills to identify and solve problems collaboratively. The heart of REP's approach was to teach a step-by-step problem-solving process that involved identifying a problem, searching for possible solutions, choosing a solution, trying it in practice, and evaluating the changes that had been made.

some key methods

REP methods included formal workshops to teach skills; "modeling" a skill by using it in practice; giving people "over-the-shoulder" advice; and providing them with written materials to explain procedures, skills, and possible alternative solutions to school problems.

group	United Bronx Parents (UBP) Bronx, New York
main client groups	UBP assisted black and Hispanic parents in the South Bronx, an area of severe poverty in New York City.
focus of assistance	UBP actively led a parent movement in the South Bronx and sought to mobilize parents in local schools to join it. They wanted decision making about educational programs to rest with parents at the local level. In pursuing this goal, they trained and organized parents to maintain a regular "presence" in the schools, to analyze the school's program, and to press for changes. They insisted that minority children be treated with respect in school, and they sought to eliminate arbitrary student suspensions and expulsions.
some key methods	Through their own activism UBP staff sought to provide a model for the skills and attitudes they wanted parents to acquire. They also conducted formal training with parents that alternated workshops with investigative visits to schools. UBP staff often acted as advocates for individual children in meetings with school authorities. Supporting these activities was a series of over 100 short handouts and handbooks developed by UBP.

We watched as they planned and reflected on their work. We interviewed group members and people they were trying to help. We visited the schools they were attempting to change and spent time watching and asking questions. We conducted more than 300 interviews and took about 2,200 pages of notes. We also collected and reviewed the written materials the groups had produced and any evaluations or other evidence about the impact of their work.

As we gathered this evidence, we began to sort out successful versus unsuccessful assistance efforts. Most groups had experienced a mixture of success and failure. In some cases, the group had helped bring about many of the changes they were aiming for. They had developed a strong relationship with the people they were trying to help, major changes were apparent in the way the schools were functioning, and these changes lasted even when the assistance group cut back its involvement.

In other cases, very little went right. Relationships with the teachers or parents were shaky or ended in bad feelings. Perhaps a few individuals changed, but mostly the school went on as before. Looking at these examples of success and failure, we asked the key question that concerned us in the study: What did assistance groups do in those situations where they were successful and in those situations where they weren't?

THE QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE

In answering this question, we have tried to be as specific as possible about how effective assistance groups are organized, how they work with client groups day-to-day, how they make plans and refine them, how they manage their own organization.

To explain the conclusions we came to about effective assistance, we have compared the process of building an effective assistance group to putting together a puzzle.

Once you've assembled a complex puzzle, you can step back from it and see some clear patterns that run through it. Similarly, in the next chapter, we describe some clear patterns running through all aspects of effective assistance group operations. One pattern, for example, is that effective assistance groups manage to spend their limited time on the things they care about most. If they feel they need to do more planning, for instance, they make the time to plan despite other pressures. In contrast, ineffective groups are always making resolutions they don't keep. They may voice the same goals as an effective group, but their talk is not matched by the way they allot their precious working hours.

Understanding such general patterns is helpful. But it is also important to break

down the complexities of an effective assistance group -- to take the puzzle apart.

There are seven important areas of assistance group activity, which one can think of as sections of a puzzle:

Puzzle Section 1. Forming the assistance group

Puzzle Section 2. Leading and managing the assistance group

Puzzle Section 3. Refining a school improvement strategy

Puzzle Section 4. Developing the advisor's role

Puzzle Section 5. Building relationships with clients

Puzzle Section 6. Providing assistance

Puzzle Section 7. Raising funds

We devote a chapter to discussing each one.

Each of the seven sections of the puzzle has from 6 to 22 specific pieces. These are critical tasks that must be carried out if you want to be effective in a particular area of assistance work. In the area of "providing assistance," for example, we found that effective assistance groups "consistently emphasize that clients need to take independent action" and are careful to avoid clients becoming dependent on them. Ineffective assistance groups are always doing things for clients that don't improve the clients' capabilities to act on their own.

In all, we've identified 86 of these puzzle pieces, 86 critical tasks that are generally carried out well by effective assistance groups and poorly by ineffective groups. A complete list of these critical tasks appears at the end of this handbook.

The critical tasks that we identified are an accurate reflection of what worked and what didn't work for the six groups we studied. We are not saying they are the last word about how to provide effective assistance. What we've tried to do in this handbook is to present what we found clearly. It's up to you to see how our observations fit your own situation and problems.

PLAN FOR THE HANDBOOK

In the next chapter, we discuss some general patterns that run through all aspects of building an effective assistance group.

Then, individual chapters are devoted to each of the seven major sections of the assistance group puzzle listed above (leading and managing the group, developing the advisor's role, and so on). At the beginning of each chapter, we list all the critical tasks that go into that area of group effort,

and then pick out certain tasks for additional discussion.

To help you apply what we found to your own situation, most chapters include two kinds of exercises that enable you to compare your group's operation against the patterns we found: "Rate Yourself" charts and "Look at Yourself" exercises.

"Rate Yourself" Charts

The "Rate Yourself" chart at the beginning of each chapter lists all the critical tasks that we found contributed to effectiveness in that particular area. For example, the box on the next page lists four of the eight critical tasks for "building and maintaining relationships with clients." Each critical task is a specific piece of the puzzle you have to put together to be effective.

Beside each critical task, we ask you to rate your group on a six-point scale: +3 means that the task is "exactly what you do" in your own assistance work; -3 means the task is "not at all what you do" in your assistance work; the points in between reflect greater or lesser success on each task.

We urge you to complete the Rate Yourself charts. If you are reading this handbook alone, filling out the charts will force you to think about how the critical tasks relate to your own work. If you just run your eyes over them, you will gain little.

If you are using the book as part of a group you should transfer all your individual responses onto one Rate Yourself chart. (Critical tasks are numbered to help you discuss them.) Then discuss the following questions, which are repeated below each chart:

- Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?
- Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a good job. What factors account for your effectiveness?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a poor job. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?

"More About Selected Critical Tasks"

Following the Rate Yourself chart in each chapter, the rest of the chapter is called "More about Selected Critical Tasks." We have picked out some of the critical tasks from the ones in the Rate Yourself chart and explained them more fully, clarifying how effective assistance groups carry them out

Four of the Eight Critical Tasks for Building Relationships with Clients

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
taking key people and groups into account	The assistance group takes into account key people and groups in the school community in the process of building relationships. (#5-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
understanding local history	The assistance group gathers information about the history of the school, school district, and community. (#5-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
match with client's situation	The assistance group makes realistic assessments of the match between its capabilities and the needs, readiness, and other key characteristics of the clients and their situation. (#5-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
agreements on mutual responsibilities	The assistance group develops a clear agreement with clients about the nature and limits of the assistance it will provide and about the clients' responsibilities in the assistance process. (#5-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

For Discussion

- Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?
- Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>good job</u>. What factors account for your effectiveness?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>poor job</u>. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?

RATE YOURSELF (sample)

and giving examples. We have not commented on all critical tasks listed in the Rate Yourself charts; this would have made the handbook too long.

"Look at Yourself" Exercises

After most of the critical tasks we describe in detail, there is an exercise that suggests how you can improve your performance of this task. These exercises are called "Look at Yourself."

Look at Yourself exercises make frequent use of four techniques explained briefly below:

Recording on newsprint. Record your ideas on large pieces of newsprint that you tape to the wall. Don't just have someone taking notes: better for everyone to have a visible record of what is said so they can think about and work with the ideas more readily. Don't use blackboards. They will soon be filled up, and you will have to destroy the record of your discussions.

Brainstorming is a method designed to get ideas out, to spur creativity, and to overcome narrow thinking. Group members should respond to a question (like "What can we do to improve staff selection?") with whatever ideas come to mind. A recorder puts them all down on newsprint, and everyone holds off on criticism until the brainstorm has shaken out a lot of ideas to sift and compare.

Follow-up analysis. After brainstorming, you will want to go back and sort through ideas. You may want to group them, elaborate on them, eliminate some ideas, or organize them according to priority. You can then type up your ideas from newsprint as a record of what you thought about or decided.

Case studies. Sometimes we ask a group member to prepare an outline or narrative describing a specific assistance effort (for example, your effort to work out an agreement with a specific client group). The case study gives you a concrete example of your work to compare against the lessons we've drawn from our research.

THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT JUST FOR READING

You probably won't want to fill out every chart or do every exercise. But the more you use this handbook actively -- the more you Rate Yourself and Look at Yourself instead of just reading passively -- the more likely it is that our analysis will be of some help to you.

Here are some ways that assistance groups have already made active use of the handbook, with and without the help of an outside consultant:

- Have staff members fill out all Rate Yourself charts. Then bring everyone together to consolidate individual responses and identify those areas of the group's work or specific critical tasks that need priority attention. One parent training group used the Rate Yourself charts to take stock of their whole organization at a time when they received a large federal grant.

- If you already have identified an area of your work or a critical task that needs attention, use the relevant Rate Yourself charts or Look at Yourself exercises to sharpen your perception of problems and to begin to solve them. For instance, the director of a state dissemination team that worked with local schools used the Rate Yourself chart for "Leading and Managing the Group" to help staff analyze management problems that most had been complaining about.

- If you are a consultant to an assistance group or a staff member charged with helping the group strengthen some aspect of its operations, pull out relevant exercises and explanations from the handbook and weave them into your effort to help the group. For instance, we have used the exercises on pages 87 and 88 called "How Detailed Are Your Maps of School Communities?" to help several assistance groups identify gaps in their understanding of the school districts where they work.

SEEING THE WHOLE PUZZLE

Some Useful Ideas

The first year that advisors from Creative Teaching Workshop spent in the schools was a difficult one. They had agreed to help teachers in three schools develop concrete learning experiences for children that involved them in measuring, counting, building, observing. One advisor had primary responsibility for each school.

Each advisor set up a teachers' center room where teachers could work on projects for students. Advisors brought terrariums and salt water aquariums into the classroom and assisted teachers in developing learning projects around them. They held workshops on topics that teachers said were of special interest to them.

In one school where there was strong initial support from the principal and a core of teachers, teachers began to incorporate many active learning projects into their classroom. In a second school, only a scattering of teachers became involved; the advisors believed this reflected the lukewarm commitment the principal had made to the advisors' work. In the third school, there was also some progress. But when the main advisor there took sides in a political conflict within the school, the director of Creative Teaching Workshop fired her. He felt she was not focusing on the advisory group's main agenda and had alienated the majority of teachers.

CTW's director had hoped that the advisors would work closely as a team, with one experienced advisor as its head. But the advisors grew reluctant to discuss their problems openly and several subtly communicated that the other advisors should not worry about "my school." Also, the CTW director and the leader of the advisory project were drawn heavily into fund raising and proposal writing for the organization, so they were not able to spend much time overseeing the advisors' work.

Reviewing the year's experience later, the advisors felt they had learned a great deal. They decided they couldn't work in a school where they didn't have strong support from the principal. They became sensitive to the problem of alienating the majority of teachers in a school by working with a small group of those who were initially responsive. They felt that they had been careless in hiring one of the advisors without thinking clearly about whether this person had skills and viewpoints that meshed with those of the group. They felt the advisors were working too much on their own and that advisory work needed more day-to-day coordination. And they recognized how fund-raising responsibilities pulled overloaded staff members away from the work in the schools.

They began to understand how such varied activities as advising teachers, hiring

advisors, supervising advisors, deciding what schools to work with, and raising funds collided with each other in their daily work.

Most of this handbook deals with the specifics of building an effective assistance group, since we've found that assistance groups succeed or fail because of their skill in putting many small pieces together.

But it is also important to see the whole puzzle and recognize the patterns that connect the small pieces. This chapter discusses some key ideas that should help you step back and see some of these patterns clearly.

Seeing the Whole Puzzle

As we followed assistance group staffs around day after day and as we dug into their histories, we found that their work fell into seven main areas of activity, or sections of the puzzle, that determined their effectiveness. These areas have already been listed in the first chapter:

- Forming the assistance group
- Leading and managing the group
- Refining a school improvement strategy
- Developing the advisor's role
- Building relationships with clients
- Providing assistance
- Raising funds

Some advisors focus most of their attention on the process of "providing assistance," the fundamental reason that assistance groups exist. However, as Creative Teaching Workshop discovered in its first year of advisory work, providing assistance is closely interlocked with other sections of a larger puzzle. Ignoring other sections of the puzzle sabotages your ability to be effective in the schools. For example, if you don't develop a clear strategy for providing help to teachers that specifies some outer limits for what you'll do, you'll soon be merely an "extra hand." If you're not careful in selecting and training staff, you'll put incompetent advisors into sensitive school or community meetings and create difficulties that will take months to undo.

Further, in each major area of your work (for example, "refining a school improvement strategy"), there are a number of critical tasks you must do well. Some people get impatient with us when we claim that an effective assistance group must do about 86 critical tasks well, but that's what our research indicates.

If you think about other groups that perform complex tasks together -- legal teams, medical teams, football teams -- it should immediately be clear why this makes sense. A team working on a complex task is not effective unless its members can do dozens of different things well -- and together.

Let's take, for example, one critical task that most groups don't foresee will have much importance for them: "The assistance group finds effective ways to stay in close contact with staff members and clients who are spread out geographically." Three of the six groups we studied had serious administrative problems at a point when they got additional money and suddenly were expanding across cities and states. They hired staff in these new locations but hadn't thought through the problems of coordinating and supporting their work effectively; this new coordination problem was just one of several dozen issues competing for their attention at the moment when "success" brought more money and a chance to grow.

We believe that an assistance group that pays careful attention to the seven areas of activity we've identified and is carrying out most of the critical tasks we've identified will be very effective. We are challenging you to check this out by thinking about your own work in light of our analysis.

Look at Yourself — How Does Your Work Fit Together?

Beginning on the next page is an exercise entitled "How Does Your Work Fit Together?" The exercise has two parts. In Part 1, you are asked to analyze a specific problem you have encountered in your assistance work and trace its origins. We provide you with an example from one of the groups we studied.

In Part 2, we ask you to generalize from your analysis of this problem and identify some ways that various areas of your activity (managing the group, raising funds, building relationships with clients) influence your ability to provide effective assistance.

The purpose of both parts of the exercise is to help you see relationships between your direct work with teachers, parents, or school administrators and the other areas of activity on which you spend your worktime.

How Does Your Work Fit Together? Part 1

1. Choose an important problem that occurred in your assistance work that most group members are familiar with.

2. Make a diagram like the one below.

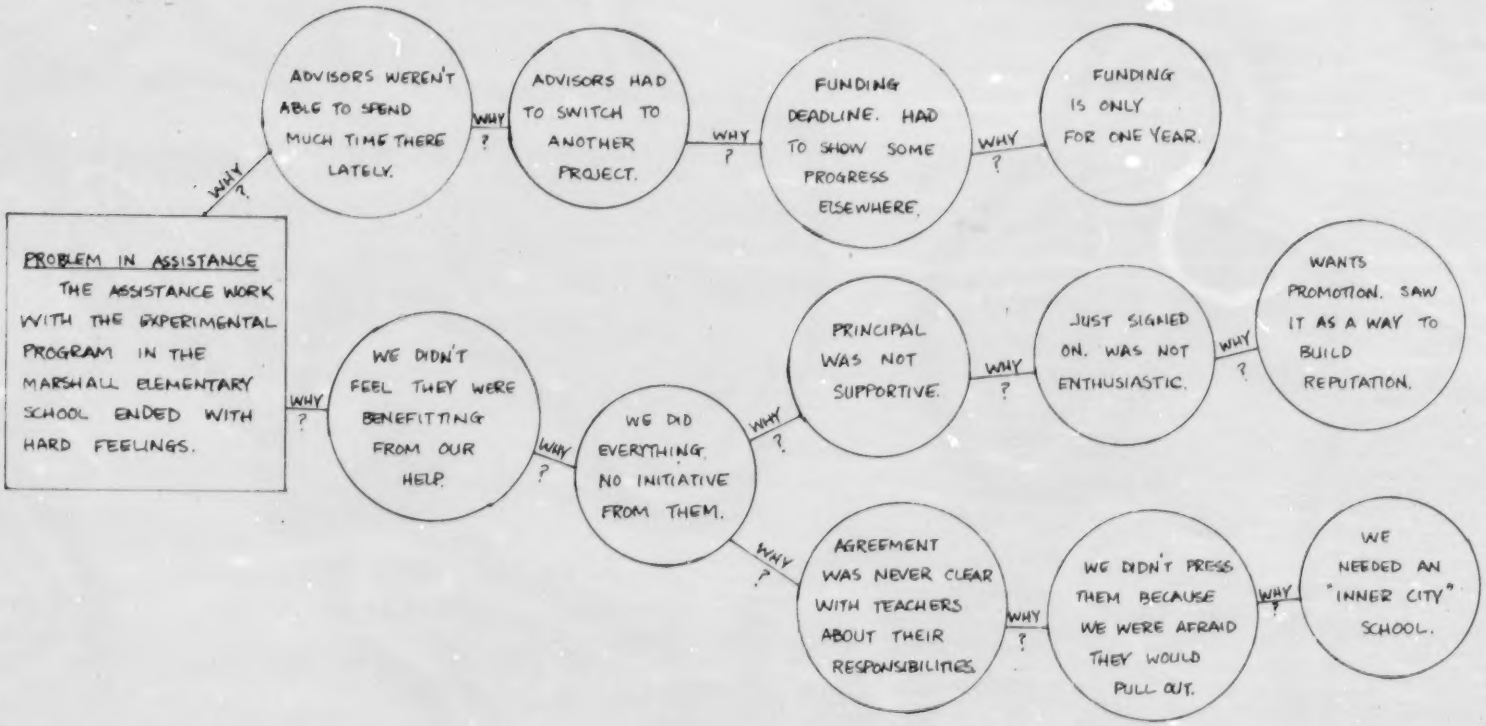
   a. In the square, describe the problem briefly.

   b. Then answer the question "Why?" with the most immediate reasons why the problem occurred.

   c. Develop these chains of "why questions" until you have taken them back five or six steps.

   d. Look over the record of your analysis and separately list out on newsprint any important patterns, issues, and problems that are suggested.

   Then do Part 2 of the exercise.


PROBLEM IN ASSISTANCE
THE ASSISTANCE WORK WITH THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM IN THE MARSHALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENDED WITH HARD FEELINGS.
WHY ?
ADVISORS WEREN'T ABLE TO SPEND MUCH TIME THERE LATELY.
WHY ?
ADVISORS HAD TO SWITCH TO ANOTHER PROJECT.
WHY ?
FUNDING DEADLINE. HAD TO SHOW SOME PROGRESS ELSEWHERE.
WHY ?
FUNDING IS ONLY FOR ONE YEAR.
WHY ?
WE DIDN'T FEEL THEY WERE BENEFITTING FROM OUR HELP.
WHY ?
WE DID EVERYTHING. NO INITIATIVE FROM THEM.
WHY ?
PRINCIPAL WAS NOT SUPPORTIVE.
WHY ?
JUST SIGNED ON. WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC.
WHY ?
WANTS PROMOTION. SAW IT AS A WAY TO BUILD REPUTATION.
WHY ?
AGREEMENT WAS NEVER CLEAR WITH TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.
WHY ?
WE DIDN'T PRESS THEM BECAUSE WE WERE AFRAID THEY WOULD PULL OUT.
WHY ?
WE NEEDED AN "INNER CITY" SCHOOL.

How Does Your Work Fit Together? Part 2

1. Use your analysis from Part 1 to list important ways that your efforts to provide assistance are affected by the other parts of your work listed below.

2. Add other important influences not suggested by the example.

3. Choose one important pattern you have identified that you feel you can make some progress in altering and make some specific plans for improvement.

How are your efforts to provide assistance affected by:

- Key things that happened when your group was formed?

  - LOOSE STYLE OF PLANNING FROM THE START
  - BELIEVED WE COULD CHANGE ANY SCHOOL

- The nature of your leadership and internal management activities (dividing up work, making decisions, hiring staff etc.)?

  - EVERYTHING HAS TO GO THROUGH MARTHA AND OFTEN BE REDONE BY HER
  - DECISIONS ARE CLOUDY -- PEOPLE LEAVE A MEETING WITH DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT WHAT WE DECIDED

- The nature of your plans and strategy for providing assistance and the way you go about developing these plans and strategies?

  - WE'VE NEVER SAT DOWN UNTIL NOW TO LOOK AT OUR PROBLEMS
  - UNDERESTIMATED THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ABOVE THE PRINCIPAL.

- The way you have defined the advisor's role and the way it works out in practice?

  - OVERLOAD -- TOO MANY SCHOOLS
  - ADVISORS SOMEHOW DON'T ASK EACH OTHER FOR HELP
  - A STRENGTH WE HAVE DEVELOPED: GOOD FORMATS FOR WORKSHOPS

- The way you develop your relationships with clients and maintain them over time?

  - DON'T GET IT CLEAR WHAT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE
  - WHAT WE PROMISE IS TOO OPEN ENDED -- CAN'T POSSIBLY FULFILL EXPECTATIONS

- Problems of raising and maintaining funds?

  - FUNDING TOO SHORT -- CAN'T GET RESULTS IN A YEAR
  - SEEMS WE MUST ALWAYS ADD A "NEW WRINKLE" TO GET FUNDS; CAN'T KEEP DOING WHAT WE GET GOOD AT

- Major external events affecting your work?

  - BUDGET CRISIS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM
  - REASSIGNMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION
  - CHANGE IN PRIORITIES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Precious Time

If you want to understand how an organization really works and what its real priorities are, analyze how its members actually spend their time.

Any organization, assistance groups included, builds a public image. Assistance groups create an idealized picture of all the things they're trying to accomplish and how they go about it. This ideal picture is important and useful. It can inspire staff members and clients by giving them a standard to live up to. It can help attract support from funders and school district decision makers.

But a public image can also mislead assistance group members, especially when you are trying to think hard about how to do a better job. You may come to believe your own rhetoric and not be sensitive to the places where there is a gap between your ideal and day-to-day reality. Or you may focus on one product of your labors -- direct work with parents or educators -- and not recognize the importance and impact of all the other things you have to do to keep the organization together.

We once found the overworked head of an assistance group huddled over his desk late at night writing paychecks and figuring tax deductions. "With all the things you have to do," we asked, "why are you doing this?" "Well, our old bookkeeper was no good, and I haven't had a chance to hire another one. So here I am." Such day-to-day, mundane activities and your ways of coping with them often determine success and failure -- not just hopes and ideals.

One of the best ways to uncover these day-to-day realities is to analyze how people actually spend their time. We found, for example, that interviewing job applicants, paying bills, and struggling with the copying machine absorb a great deal more time than most people realize and that poorly performed administrative work pushes some assistance groups to the edge of chaos. We found that activities related to raising and maintaining enough money also absorb vast amounts of staff time. The need to please funders is also a major cause for sudden shifts in an assistance group's worktime.

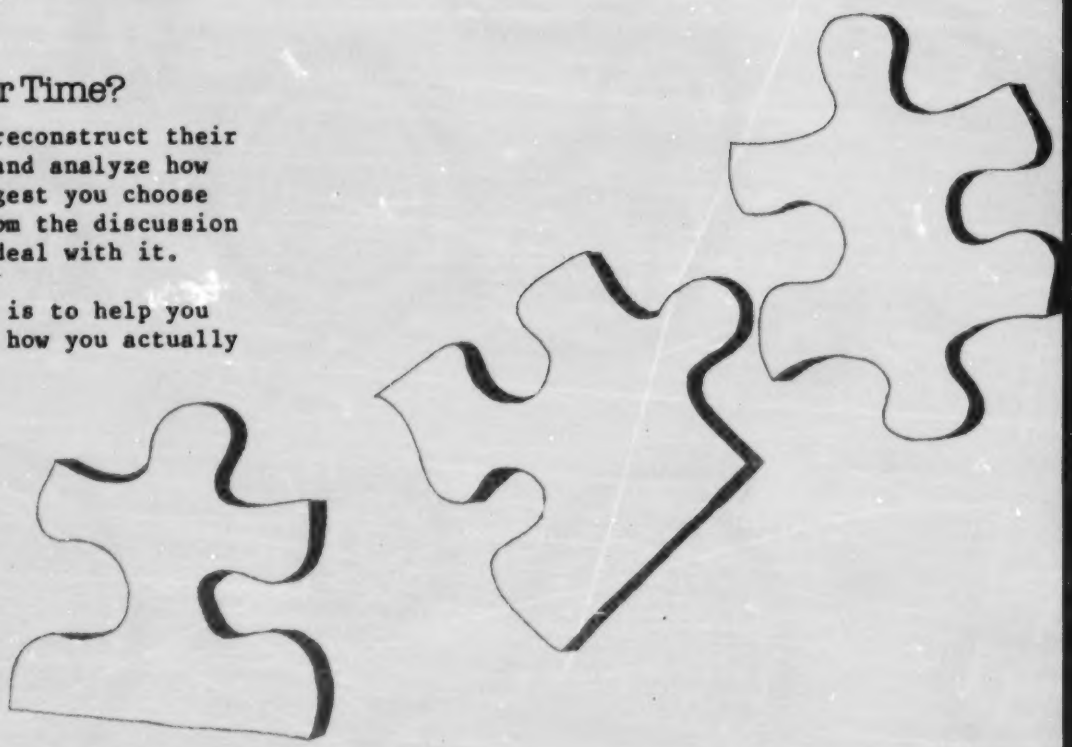
We found that assistance groups list numerous priorities in their public statements about how schools should be improved, but they devote the bulk of their time to only a few of them -- and not always the ones they say are most important. We found that although some groups make elaborate plans for analyzing their assistance work, actually sitting down and doing the analysis often has a low priority. When the inevitable time crunch comes, analysis sessions are postponed.

To be effective, assistance groups must work with the same clients over a long period. Yet you generally have a small staff and uncertain funding. The way you use your limited resources of staff time is crucial to your effectiveness. One of our aims in this handbook is to help you examine how you really use your time and how you might use it more effectively.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Spend Your Time?

Group members are asked to reconstruct their time for a two-week period and analyze how they spent it. We also suggest you choose one problem that emerges from the discussion and make specific plans to deal with it.

The purpose of the exercise is to help you compare your priorities and how you actually spend your time.



How Do You Spend Your Time?

1. Have group members keep track of what they did during a <u>two-week period</u>, making notes like the ones below. (Or have them think back over the past two weeks and put down as much as they can remember.) Record this information on a form like the one below.

2. List the three highest priorities for each individual's work. Then discuss the following questions:
   a. In what ways are your time charts consistent with your priorities?
   b. In what ways are your time charts inconsistent with your priorities? Are there important priorities to which you are actually devoting very little time?
   c. When the time crunch comes, what tasks receive the highest priority? Which ones get dropped? Why?

3. Choose one problem that has emerged from your discussion of time use that you think you can make some progress in solving. Make some specific plans for change. For example:
   a. Are there tasks done by key people that could be delegated?
   b. Are there tasks that are really lower priority that could be delayed or dropped?
   c. Would better coordination among some group members save time?

SUSAN RICH, PROGRAM DIRECTOR	MONDAY, JANUARY 18	TUESDAY, JANUARY 19	WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20
<u>CURRENT PRIORITIES</u> 1. COORDINATE ADVISORY PROGRAM 2. OBTAIN CONTINUED FUNDING FOR ADVISORY PROGRAM 3. FINISH OUR TEACHER TRAINING MANUAL	9-2 FINISHED REVIEWING PROPOSAL DRAFT. 2-5 HELPED PROOF AND XEROX FINAL COPY OF PROPOSAL TO MEET MAILING DEADLINE. 7:30-10 PARENTS MEETING IN OAK PARK.	8:30-10 STAFF MEETING TO REVIEW PROBLEMS AT MARSHALL ELEMENTARY. 10:30-12:30 APPOINTMENT WITH MARSHALL PRINCIPAL. 1:30-4 MISCELLANEOUS DESK WORK, ANSWERED CORRESPONDENCE, CHECKED PAYROLL, MADE CALLS. 9-11 WORKED AT HOME ON SPEECH FOR WEDNESDAY.	9-2 INVITED SPEECH FOR CURRICULUM COURSE AT CITY UNIVERSITY, RELATED TRAVEL. 2-5 WORKED AT HOME ON TEACHERS TRAINING MANUAL. 8-9:30 ON PHONE WITH RICK ABOUT LATEST CRISIS AT MARSHALL ELEMENTARY.

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Adjusting and Standing Firm

Effective assistance groups stand for something; this ability to stand firm is key to their ability to bring about change. They also adapt to different people, schools, communities, circumstances -- but they do it carefully and without sacrificing the core of what they are all about.

Effective assistance groups know when to stand firm. They have strong values and beliefs about how the schools can be improved. They have a clear sense of what they want to accomplish and how to go about it that has been refined over time. This central core of commitment, self-assurance, and accumulated skill makes a vital contribution to the group's effectiveness. One parent group advisor from AFRAM Associates analyzed how crisis points arise when his group feels the need to stand firm:

> "With every group we help, we always reach a crisis point where there is a major conflict. They want us to do something for them, like write a proposal or plan a meeting, that we think they should be doing for themselves. Then they tell us we're not doing our job. And we tell them that we aren't there to solve their problems for them -- they have to do that themselves."

Assistance groups that are merely "flexible" and "responsive" end up working on trivial issues and make clients dependent on them.

But effective groups are not merely applying a rigid formula. In all aspects of their work, they are slowly adjusting to new staff members, clients, schools, communities, circumstances.

For example, Rural Education Program developed a problem-solving process that they taught to educators, parents, and students to help them solve educational problems together. However, REP found that unless there was some pressing problem that people were committed to solve, many tended to lose interest in learning the process. So the advisors began to focus their work in those rural communities where there were clearly defined issues that the community was anxious to deal with, such as where a new high school would be built in a mountainous rural area.

In every aspect of assistance group activity, there is a continual need to decide when to adjust and when to stand firm. For example, a young teacher advisor who was a talented painter started to help teachers in a New York school. She began to gravitate toward a few young artistic teachers who immediately responded to her creative talents. More experienced advisors saw a danger in what she was doing:

> "If you get identified with that small group of teachers, you'll cut yourself off from 90% of the staff. You have to extend yourself to everyone. For example, I always find out which teacher everyone else

says is the worst one, the least committed, and pay a lot of attention to that person."

The assistance group's experienced advisors wanted the new advisor to use her artistic talents to motivate teachers, but within the limits of a strategy they had found effective.

In a successful assistance group, you will constantly see attempts to weigh the merits of standing firm versus adjusting. In dealing with funders, in supervising staff, in developing relationships with clients, in responding to the problems of a particular school community, you have to sort out this issue. And in making these decisions, flexibility isn't everything. Adjustments that strengthen your work require careful analysis of their implications.

Look at Yourself — When Do You Adjust and When Do You Stand Firm?

The exercise asks you to sort out when you believe that you should adjust and when you should stand firm on several important issues that inevitably arise in your work.

The purpose of the exercise is to make you more aware of how this issue of balance continually affects you and shapes the directions of your work.

When Do You Adjust and When Do You Stand Firm?

Look at each of the areas in the first column where your group must decide what adjustments to make between your school improvement strategy and the demands of a particular situation. Sort out some things you would be flexible about, given the circumstances, and some things on which you would stand firm.

ISSUES	THINGS WE WOULD STAND FIRM ON	THINGS WE WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT
Qualities needed in an advisor we would hire.	- EXPERIENCED SUCCESSFUL TEACHER IN URBAN SCHOOL. - BELIEF IN INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION AND TEAM TEACHING. CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF SKILLS NEEDED TO PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE. - MUST HIRE BLACK AND HISPANIC ADVISORS.	- PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AS AN ADVISOR HELPFUL BUT NOT ESSENTIAL.
Qualities that need to be present in a client group we would agree to work with.	- STRONG PRINCIPAL BACKING ESSENTIAL. PUT HER TO THE TEST FIRST. - "AGREEMENT WORKSHOP" AND SIGNED AGREEMENT FROM 80% OF TEACHERS. - TRIAL PERIOD WITH SPECIFIC GOALS.	- WILLING TO COMMIT STAFF MEMBER PART-TIME AS LIAISON. - WILLING TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE PROJECT.
Types of projects for which we would accept funding.		
Things that an advisor is definitely supposed to do and definitely not supposed to do.		
Goals that we are working toward and directions that we want to avoid in aiding a client group.		
Other_____ _____		

Understanding Human Systems

School communities, assistance groups, and other organizations can be thought of as human systems. Human systems are tied together by a complex set of stated and unstated rules, customary ways of doing things, political pressures, strong feelings and fears that often make even outwardly simple changes difficult.

Much money and energy has been invested in trying to change schools by people who have an inaccurate idea about where the barriers to change lie. Some people have looked at schools as collections of books, curriculum guides, buildings, equipment, formal rules, dollars. They try to improve schools by changing these tangible things. Books, curricula, formal rules, and the rest are important, but their importance is often secondary.

What often matters most is the way a school and the various groups who have a stake in it (what we refer to as the school community) are organized as human systems.

Many social science and popular terms describe the forces that hold the school community together as a human system: unwritten rules, attitudes, norms, values, expectations, feelings, frames of reference, fears, points of view, belief systems, organizational routines, roles, customs, interest group pressures, political deals, standard operating procedures, mutual understandings.

These social forces are powerful stabilizing influences that keep the schools running today the way they did yesterday and cause unexpected resistance even to apparently simple changes.

One set of parents found this out when they asked a special education teacher to go into their child's math class to find out why the class was upsetting their learning-disabled son and to help the math teacher work with him more effectively. After offering several excuses about "scheduling," the special education teacher burst into tears and said: "In this school, one teacher just doesn't go into another teacher's classroom." The special education teacher was being asked to do something that appeared outwardly simple, but in fact went against one of the strongest unwritten rules that determine how many schools operate: teachers work alone and usually resent it when anyone else observes or criticizes their teaching.

Effective assistance groups gain an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the complex subtle ways that the school community functions as a human system, and they focus on changing those deep-seated organizational patterns most relevant to their objectives.

Look at Yourself — How Do Your School Communities Function as Human Systems?

The purpose of this exercise is to make you more aware of how the things you'd like to change about school communities conflict with the ways that they presently function as human systems. We also ask you to consider how you might better overcome these barriers.

How Do Your School Communities Function as Human Systems?

Think about the school community as we have defined it on page 4. On newsprint, make three columns:

1. In the first, list some major things about the school community that you'd like to change.
2. In the second, list and discuss some characteristics of your school communities as human systems that cause them to resist these changes.
3. In the third, list and discuss methods that you use or can use to overcome these problems.

THINGS WE'D LIKE TO CHANGE	BARRIERS IN THE HUMAN SYSTEM	WAYS TO OVERCOME
PRINCIPAL SHOULD BE THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER OF THE SCHOOL.	— BUSIES HIMSELF WITH "ADMINISTRIVIA." — NEVER TRAINED ABOUT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES. LACKS CONFIDENCE. — TEACHERS RESENT PRINCIPAL COMING INTO CLASSROOM. AN INVASION.	— HELP HIM ANALYZE WHAT HE CAN DELEGATE. — POSSIBLE WORKSHOP SESSIONS FOR PRINCIPALS. — GO INTO CLASSROOM WITH PRINCIPAL. BOTH OBSERVE AND DISCUSS WHAT'S GOING ON. — WORKSHOP SESSION TO CONFRONT ISSUE. PRINCIPAL EXPLAINS RATIONALE AND TEACHERS DISCUSS FEARS.

Assistance Groups Are Human Systems Too

It sounds simple to pull together a few people who always wanted to work as advisors to teachers or parents and get out there to do good. But an effective assistance group is more than a collection of individuals doing their thing, no matter how talented they are.

In fact, we found that an assistance group is one of the most complicated small organizations on the face of the earth to put together and to maintain.

Under the surface, there is much more to an assistance group than just going out and helping people. Ideas about how to provide effective assistance need to be developed, materials written, money raised, effective staff hired, decisions made. The list -- and the work -- seems endless.

And since there are few recognized models, the assistance group is usually trying to invent methods as it goes along. Furthermore, the work is always liable to be upset by decisions made by outside forces over whom the group has little control (funders, school superintendents, school principals, an angry group of teachers or parents, a larger organization of which the assistance group is a part).

Like a school community, then, an assistance group can best be understood as a complex human system. Some of the subtle social connections that hold this system together can develop in ways that are useful to the group's work (for example, the group can build shared understandings, tested by experience, about how to handle touchy situations with client groups).

But some of the group's characteristic patterns can be dysfunctional (for example, under the guise of respecting staff talents, the group may fail to develop a process for training new staff). One of the major purposes of this handbook is to help you look at your group as a human system and think about what you can do to improve its effectiveness.

Look at Yourself — How Does Your Group Function as a Human System?

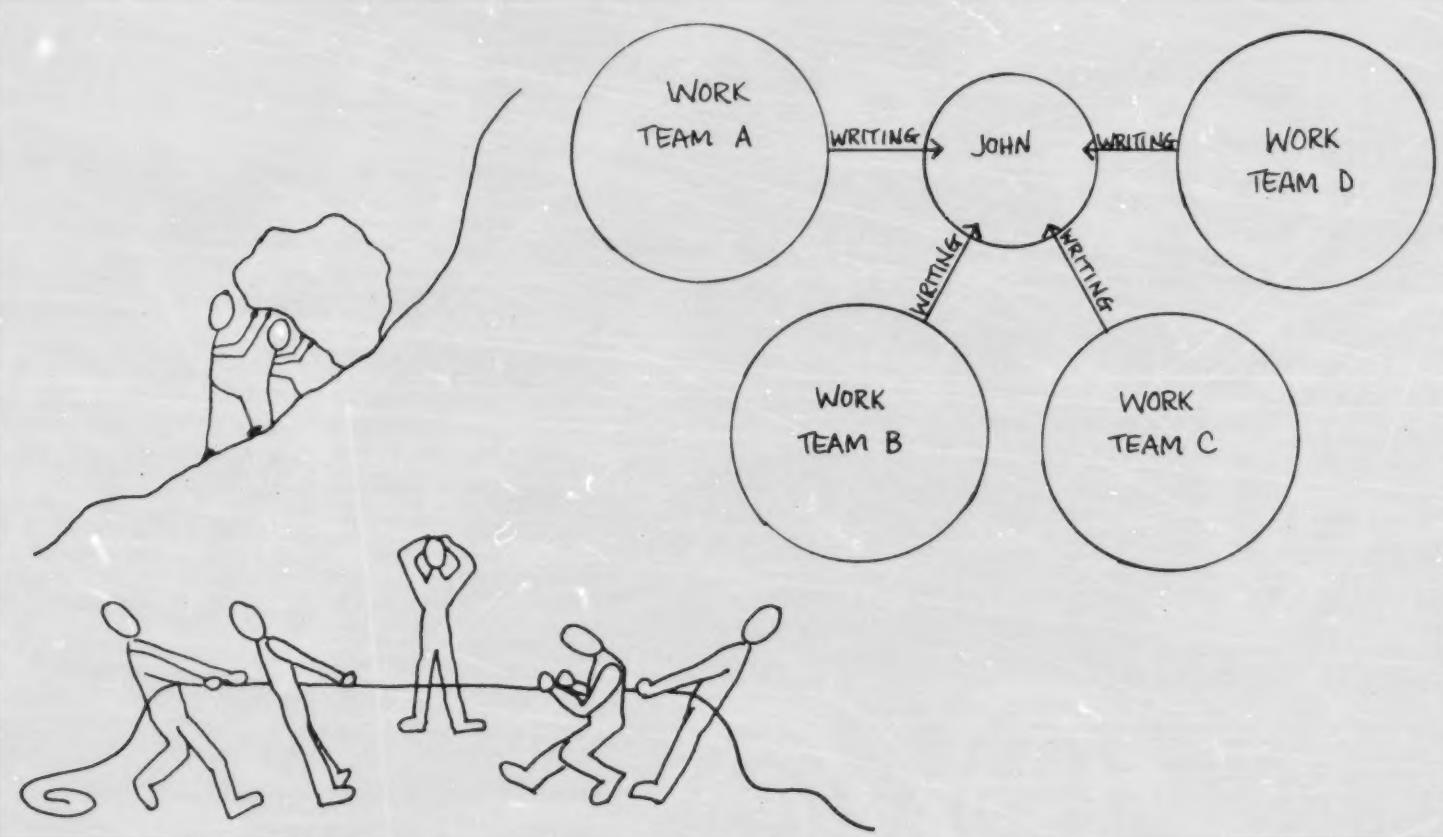
This exercise has two parts. In Part 1, you draw a diagram or picture of your assistance group as a human system. Then group members share their pictures with the rest of the group.

In Part 2, you analyze what people have expressed through their drawings, deciding how different patterns in your human system either help or hurt your effectiveness. Finally, you pick one issue that has surfaced and make some plans to deal with it.

The purpose of the exercise is to make you more sensitive to how your group functions as a human system and how this affects your work.

How Does Your Group Function as a Human System? Part 1

1. On newsprint, each person should make a diagram or picture that expresses how your assistance group functions as a human system. (Avoid making a traditional organizational chart, which shows formal lines of authority but not the way people really connect.)
2. Put them up around the walls. Allow each member to explain what they were trying to communicate with what they drew.



How Does Your Group Function as a Human System? Part 2

1. Think about the patterns from the diagrams in Part 1 that suggest how your group functions as a human system. Use brainstorming to list them in the first column on a sheet of newsprint. Leave space between them.

2. In the second column, indicate whether each pattern is helpful or harmful or both. Make notes to explain why.

3. Choose one issue that surfaces in this analysis on which you feel you can make some specific progress. Make plans to deal with this issue.

CHARACTERISTICS AS A HUMAN SYSTEM	HELPFUL, HARMFUL, OR BOTH
PEOPLE TRY TO SOLVE ANY PROBLEM BY WORKING HARDER. PEOPLE WHO COMPLAIN ABOUT WORKLOAD ARE SEEN AS LAZY.	HELPS - WE GET AN AMAZING AMOUNT DONE. - PULLS US THROUGH CRISES WHEN OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WOULD FOLD. HURTS - KEEPS US FROM ANALYZING HOW WORK COULD BE DONE BETTER. - STAFF BURNS OUT AND LEAVES. - CAUSES FAMILY PROBLEMS. - DEPRESSING.
EVERYONE DEPENDS ON JOHN TO WRITE JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT COMES OUT OF HERE.	HELPS - JOHN IS THE BEST WRITER. GOOD RESULTS. HURTS - LONG DELAYS. PRODUCTS LATE. - PEOPLE DON'T WRITE AS WELL AS THEY COULD. "JOHN WILL FIX IT." - JOHN'S OTHER WORK SUFFERS.

From Patterns in the Puzzle to Its Sections and Parts

In this chapter, we have described some important patterns that run through all aspects of assistance group work:

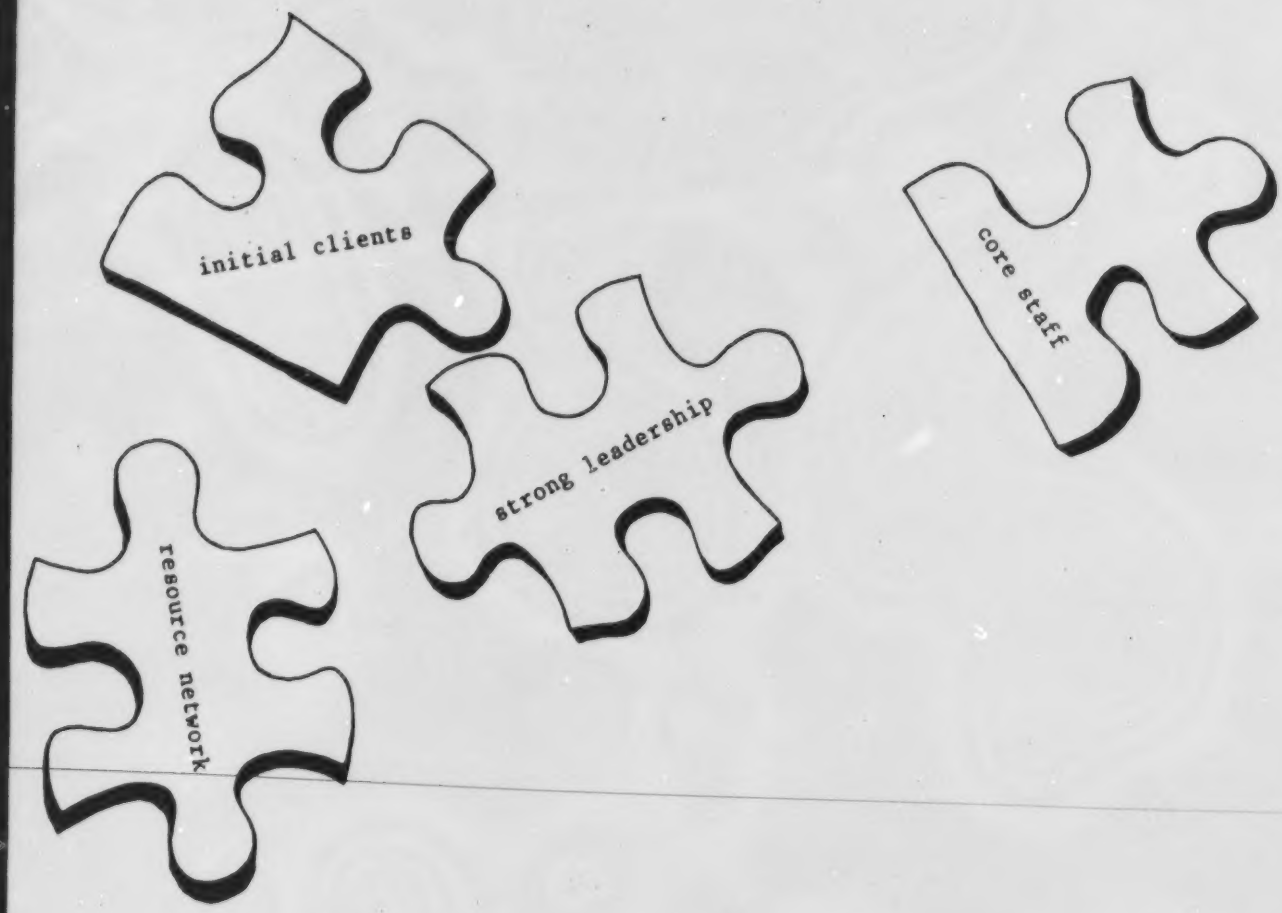
- The seven major sections of assistance group activity are closely interrelated. Effective groups become increasingly expert in understanding and managing these complex relationships. Ineffective groups are always struggling with the problems that arise because they don't fit the major sections of the puzzle together into a complete picture.

- Assistance groups have a limited amount of staff time to devote to the many demands of their work. Effective groups focus their precious time and energy on the tasks and problems they judge most important to their objectives. Ineffective groups don't make hard choices about how to spend their time; they get diverted from their priorities.

- Effective assistance groups stand for something; this ability to stand firm is key to bringing about change. They also adapt to different people, schools, communities, circumstances -- but they do it carefully and without sacrificing the core of what they are all about. Ineffective groups are often too flexible, afraid to set limits or uphold ideals and standards, either among their own staff or in their work with clients.

- School communities and assistance groups are both human systems, bound together by a complex set of rules, pressures, customary ways of doing things. Effective assistance groups develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of how their own organization and the school communities they are trying to change function as human systems, while ineffective groups do not.

We have devoted this chapter to identifying some patterns that we see when we look at the whole picture of the work of an effective assistance group. But that whole picture, as we've said, is made up of several interlocking sections, and each of those sections is made up of smaller tasks -- puzzle pieces, as we've called them -- that need to be put together to make your group effective. In the following chapters, we analyze the seven sections of the puzzle and the pieces that make up each section. We begin at the beginning: with the initial effort to form the group.



PUZZLE SECTION 1

Forming the Assistance Group

AFRAM Associates was formed in 1968 at the height of the struggle for community control of schools in Harlem; its founder, Preston Wilcox, was a central figure in that struggle. Several years later AFRAM won a federal contract to help parents in eight eastern cities participate aggressively in their local schools. AFRAM's style and commitment brought them into regular conflict with their federal funders and with local school officials, but they persisted in an assistance program for parents based on the belief that:

> "Parents/families have a natural <u>non-negotiable</u> right/responsibility to guard/protect the right of their children to be perceived as being human/educable, as being members of a community, and to be involved in shaping the content/policy of their children's educational programs. The failure of school systems to effectively provide educational justice to all children, shifts the exercise of parental decision-making from a right/responsibility <u>to an absolute necessity</u>."

At about the same time AFRAM was being formed, a group of educators at the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/) in Dayton were testing out another strategy for improving the schools. /I/D/E/A/ drew together a staff of professional educators who had been trying to make "individualized education" a reality in local schools and classrooms. They developed a plan for moving toward individualized instruction called Individually Guided Education. IGE entails reorganizing a school into learning communities taught by a team of teachers and giving each child his or her own learning program. The /I/D/E/A/ staff moved systematically to test their ideas in schools, to develop materials for training, and to expand the IGE program. By 1976, almost 1,400 schools had adopted the IGE program. In interviewing the /I/D/E/A/ staff at that time, we were struck by their deep commitment to the notion that:

> "Students differ in their learning aptitudes, talents, and interests just as they differ in their height, weight, and physical strength. . . . The ideal school takes into account each student's capacities and interests by grouping and regrouping students into appropriate learning activities regardless of age or year in school."

AFRAM and /I/D/E/A/ have each consistently pursued a distinctive philosophy over a period of years about improving the education of children. Strikingly, beliefs about children, learning, the nature of schools, and the nature of society that each group began with were still apparent many years later.

<u>We found that forming the assistance group was the most important single event in each group's history</u>. This is, of course, the

first section of the puzzle that the groups put into place. Patterns were established during that period, for better or worse, that were clearly evident five or ten years later. The commitment of /I/D/E/A/ to individualized education, of AFRAM and United Bronx Parents to parent control of the schools, of Creative Teaching Workshop to experiential education, of Rural Education Program to a rational problem-solving process were strong emotional commitments that bound these groups together in the first place and that they never wavered from subsequently. Each group started with a substantially different analysis of what was wrong with the schools and what would make them better; they then invested years of time in acting on this initial commitment.

Consider the critical tasks for the formation of a group listed in the following Rate Yourself chart. If you are in the process of forming a group, the critical tasks listed will help you with your planning. If you are part of an already functioning group, reflecting about how your group was formed will help you identify both helpful and harmful influences from the past.

Critical Tasks for Forming the Assistance Group

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
initial strategy provides focus	The founding leadership develops an initial school improvement strategy that provides a clear sense of priorities and focus. (#1-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
strong leadership	Strong top leadership organizes resources to develop and carry out the group's strategy. (#1-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
core staff	The founding leadership assembles a core staff who believe in the basic assumptions of the group's strategy and who have worked in the types of situations where assistance will be provided. (#1-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
initial funds for about three years	The assistance group obtains sufficient funds for about three years to allow an initial period of strategy development through direct work with clients. (#1-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
initial clients	The assistance group successfully develops initial relationships with a set of clients to whom they begin to provide assistance. (#1-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
resource network	The assistance group develops an extensive resource network of people and groups who provide crucial information and support. (#1-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

<u>For Discussion</u>

- Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?
- Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>good job</u>. What factors account for your effectiveness?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>poor job</u>. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?

RATE YOURSELF

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

The critical tasks in the Rate Yourself chart identify the major puzzle pieces needed to establish an effective assistance group: an initial statement of a strategy for improving the schools, strong leadership that assembles the needed pieces, a core staff committed to the assistance group's ideas, enough money to work with clients for several years, ties with clients interested in receiving assistance, and a wide-ranging resource network of people and groups.

If one critical task is not carried out appropriately, the chances that the group will be effective over time are substantially reduced. If the core staff really doesn't agree with the group's direction, for instance, crises will regularly develop around this issue.

Initial Strategy Provides Focus

In an effective group, the group's leadership initially defines a school improvement strategy that gives their work a clear initial sense of focus and set of priorities, although many of the specifics of this strategy aren't worked out yet. As defined on page 4, we use the term "school improvement strategy" to describe a group's overall plan for improving the schools. The initial strategy of effective groups indicates:

- What is wrong with the schools? (Parents are shut out of the decision-making process; or instruction is not geared to the individual child.)
- How can the schools be changed to address these problems? (Parents should have a major say in decision making and be co-teachers in the classroom; or teachers should work in teams and develop individual learning plans for each child.)
- What should the assistance group do to bring about these changes? (Identify completely with parents and help them gain skills and confidence; or teach school staff a new process for making decisions and solving problems.)

Regular attention to refining a school improvement strategy is a major long-term concern for effective assistance groups. We talk more about this issue on page 77.

Strong Leadership

Strong leadership from one person or a small cohesive leadership group is critical in translating the group's initial strategy into an organization that survives and has some successes. The key leaders of effective groups we studied had good two-way communication with their staffs, but they were not afraid to set high standards and limits. We talk more about the leadership issue on page 52.

Core Staff

Failures in selecting core staff at the beginning often cause destructive disputes and firings down the road. Core staff of

effective assistance groups believe strongly in the basic assumptions of the group's school improvement strategy. Effective staff members at Creative Teaching Workshop would not fit at /I/D/E/A/ and vice versa.

But commitment alone is not enough. Effective staff members also have had practical experience working in the types of schools and communities the group is planning to help. We say more about staff selection and training on pages 60 to 65.

Initial Funds

Most assistance groups face continual problems in obtaining funds to support their work. Both independent assistance groups and those that are part of school systems must constantly compete for government or foundation funds, or they must convince school districts that their work merits local financial support. It takes several years to establish a successful assistance group, and time means money. More about the continuous need to raise funds appears on pages 143 to 147.

Initial Clients

Though it may seem obvious, assistance groups need to find specific school districts, schools, teachers, principals, and parents who like what the advisors have to offer and are willing to cooperate with the assistance group over several years. Building and maintaining these relationships is tricky. Many advisors dig their own graves at the beginning by promising too much. Building and maintaining relationships is analyzed in detail on pages 109 to 120.

Resource Network

Finally, effective assistance groups consciously develop a complex set of contacts with several hundred individuals and groups who can be of help to them. This resource network becomes a source of ideas, inside information, legitimacy, emotional support, potential staff members and consultants, potential clients, and funding leads. More about building these resource networks appears on pages 68 and 69.

Look at Yourself — How Has Your Founding Affected You?

If you have just begun to form an assistance group, you should reflect on how you are putting the key pieces together. If you are part of an existing group, you should analyze how your founding currently affects your work, positively and negatively -- which of your initial ideas and methods do you want to hold onto and which have become dysfunctional? This exercise will encourage you to reflect on the particular combination of ideas, people, and other resources brought together in forming your group.

How Has Your Founding Affected You?

Below, we list key ingredients brought together when an assistance group is founded. You can use the questions as a springboard for discussion and record key ideas on newsprint.

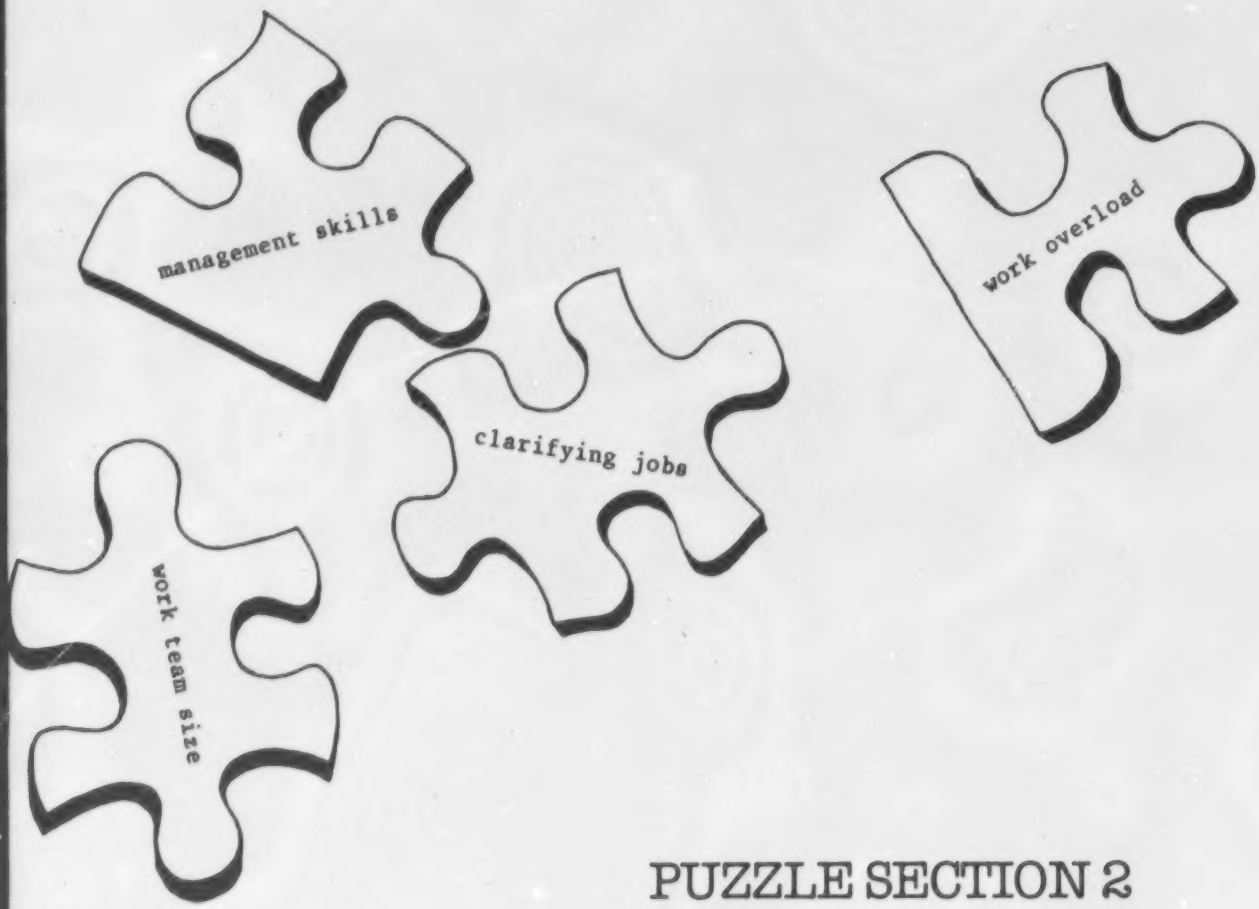
1. What were some important qualities of each of these ingredients when you got started?

2. How do these characteristics continue to influence your work?

3. List some key characteristics you trace from your founding that you want to protect. Discuss ways you might do so.

4. Choose one influence from the past that you agree creates some problems for you presently. Make specific plans to deal with this problem.

INGREDIENT	IMPORTANT QUALITIES AT FOUNDING	CONTINUING INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK
INITIAL STRATEGY PROVIDES FOCUS	■ What were some of the key ideas about improving schools that brought the group together? ■ How did these ideas shape the early assistance work?	■ How have these ideas changed over time? ■ Which ones do you see as major strengths at present? ■ Do any create problems? ■ How do they shape your present work?
STRONG LEADERSHIP	■ Who was the initial leadership? ■ What key decisions did they make at the beginning? ■ How did their style affect the group when it began?	■ Are the initial leaders still with the group? ■ How does the style of the initial leadership affect your work now?
CORE STAFF	■ Who were the initial core staff members and how did their qualities shape the early work?	■ Are the initial core staff members still with the group? ■ How have the actions of the initial core staff affected your present work?
INITIAL FUNDS	■ Where did the initial funding come from? ■ What was it for? ■ How did it shape the early work?	■ How has the availability of funds over time shaped your present work?
INITIAL CLIENTS	■ Who were the initial clients and what were they like? ■ How did working with them shape the type of assistance the group provided?	■ Do you still work with any of your initial clients? ■ How has your initial work with them affected your present assistance efforts?
RESOURCE NETWORK	■ Who were some key individuals and groups who helped you in the beginning? ■ What did you get from them?	■ Do the groups and individuals in your initial resource network continue to help you?



PUZZLE SECTION 2

Leading and Managing the Assistance Group

The staff members of many assistance groups, and their leaders, often have little patience with the tasks involved in managing the group -- dividing up the work, defining people's jobs, making decisions, selecting staff, training staff, supervising projects, maintaining communications among staff, overseeing routine administrative and clerical work. It's probably the section of the puzzle that gets the least attention. Staff members often come to the assistance group seeing themselves as creative people or political activists and not as managers.

Assistance groups frequently rely on a high level of commitment to the group and on rhetoric about all members participating and doing their share to deal with these issues. One group leader stated a rationalization that we heard several times: "We're so busy doing our work that we don't have time for managing the organization."

Our observations of effective assistance groups suggest the flaws in this rationalization. We found that effective assistance groups paid careful attention to leadership and management tasks, and that over time they carried them out with increasing competence.

We repeatedly saw how sloppy management came back to haunt a group. In one group, a staff member was hired because of "good vibes," without a careful analysis of whether he could do the work; he was fired six months later in a confrontation that almost tore the organization apart.

Another group that hadn't stabilized its administrative and clerical procedures was constantly plagued by confusion and extra work that drew key program staff into routine tasks and took them away from the ones they were hired to do. A group that had no real methods for supervising its advisors suddenly found that the advisors were repeating mistakes that the group's previous experience had highlighted, mistakes that could have been avoided.

Given the critical importance of these leadership and management activities, then, we ask you not to skip over this chapter but to look carefully at how well your group carries out these critical tasks.

RATE YOURSELF!

Critical Tasks for Leading and Managing the Assistance Group

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
strong leadership	Strong top leadership organizes resources to develop and carry out the group's strategy. (#2-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
management skills	The top leadership recognizes the importance of managing the organization effectively, and improves its management skills as the organization becomes more complex. (#2-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
work teams with skilled leaders	Top leadership develops work teams that operate in ways consistent with overall strategy; they also develop the skills of team leaders so that the teams can operate without constant intervention by the leadership. (#2-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
balancing coordination and independence	The top leadership distinguishes between tasks that require close coordination among work teams and tasks that can be carried out more independently. Coordination is fostered by overlapping team membership and regular planning and communication across teams. (#2-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
headquarters versus field staff	The assistance group guards against a split between staff who work at headquarters and those who work in the field. (#2-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
work team size	Work teams and subteams of two to seven staff members tackle specific projects. (#2-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
clarifying jobs	The assistance group clarifies job responsibilities in writing and/or through a clear shared understanding among staff members. (#2-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
work overload	The assistance group strives to minimize work overload. (#2-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
dividing responsibility for decision making	The assistance group finds workable procedures for dividing decision-making responsibility among top leaders, middle-level leaders, and other program staff. (#2-9)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
creative decision-making techniques	The assistance group experiments with decision-making and problem-solving techniques (e.g., brainstorming, listing pros and cons on newsprint, role-playing) and incorporates the ones they find useful into their day-to-day work. (#2-10)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
selecting staff	The group carefully hires program staff members who believe in the basic assumptions of the group's strategy and who have worked effectively in the types of situations where assistance will be provided. (#2-11)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
training staff	The assistance group trains new staff members through a conscious plan that includes written materials, formal training sessions, observing assistance, and help in analyzing that experience. (#2-12)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

RATE YOURSELF

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
monitoring & supervising work	The assistance group carries out regular routines for monitoring work and supervising staff. (#2-13)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
group commitment	The assistance group builds a strong sense of group commitment through such procedures as confronting staff members when they are departing from the group's strategy, including members in the social and emotional life of the group, and emphasizing the prestige of being part of the group. (#2-14)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
internal communication	The assistance group members experiment with different methods for communicating with each other (such as regular staff meetings, phone conversations, informal discussions, written reports) until they find a set of communication methods that work for them and are built into their daily activities. (#2-15)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
resource network	The assistance group develops an extensive resource network of people and groups who provide crucial information and support. (#2-16)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
geography problems	The assistance group finds effective ways to stay in close contact with staff members and clients who are spread out geographically. (#2-17)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
changes in staff size	Assistance group leaders carefully consider the impact of possible changes in staff size and make plans for meeting the stresses that may occur when staff size changes. (#2-18)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
technical skills	The assistance group develops high quality specialized technical skills (either on staff or through consultants) in such areas as finances, media, and writing. (#2-19)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
routine administrative and clerical work	The assistance group carries out day-to-day administrative and clerical activities (typing, filing, bookkeeping, payroll, travel arrangements, etc.) efficiently and effectively. (#2-20)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
increasing administrative support	As staff expands, the assistance group increases administrative support roles to relieve work overload on program staff. (#2-21)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
clear personnel policies	The assistance group develops consistent personnel policies and procedures. (#2-22)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

For Discussion

- **Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?**
- **Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>good job</u>. What factors account for your effectiveness?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>poor job</u>. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?**

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

Strong Leadership Is Essential

Assistance groups must build an organization without any good organizational models. You must mesh the talents of people with diverse skills and training. You must build and maintain a variety of complicated outside relationships with school districts, funders, universities, state departments of education.

The complexity of these tasks can strain your organization to the point of breakdown. We have found that the quality of the group's top leadership is decisive in counteracting these difficulties and moving you toward your goals. Top leadership (usually one or two people) must at once provide a clear direction for the group and give staff members the knowledge and skills to take independent initiative consistent with that direction.

Effective leaders, we found, are at the heart of their group's effort to develop an effective strategy to improve the schools. They have personal qualities that both their staff and their clients can identify with. They are seen as acting in the best interest of the organization, rather than from personal motives. Therefore, when their staff disagrees with them, and expresses that disagreement, the leade.s' decision is ultimately accepted as legitimate. One observer described such leadership qualities in United Bronx Parents:

> "The executive director functions as the living embodiment of the United Bronx Parents' philosophy. It is she who has lived it and developed it. She has articulated it to the staff and to the outside world. Before doing anything that might affect the policy or have policy implications, other staff check with the executive director. If she does not approve of what is being suggested, there is room for negotiation or for presenting more evidence. However, her decision is ultimately accepted. Before acting, United Bronx Parents' staff with decision-making responsibilities often first think about 'what Mrs. Antonetty would do in the situation.'"

Effective leaders set high standards and are not afraid to define limits. As we will discuss below, they delegate many decisions and consult with staff members about others; however, they press staff members to high levels of achievement in line with the ideals of their organization. And they are not afraid to object when they see a staff member acting in ways inconsistent with the group's basic strategy.

Management Skills

In trying to insure that an assistance group's methods remain consistent with overall purposes, there is a tendency for top

leadership to keep a hand in all parts of the group's operations. The result is drastic overload on group leaders and, often, staff resentment. This problem is intensified by "success" and related expansion. Leaders who saw themselves initially as activists or program development specialists must take on complex management responsibilities. They often seek to meet these responsibilities as they have in the past -- by working harder -- but they ultimately reach their limits.

If your organization is going to make it, it is critical that the leader who is confronted with these problems begins to recognize that managing the group is a key part of his or her role. One assistance group leader describes his growing awareness of this need:

> "How can I be supportive as an organizational or administrative leader? I found that I had poor routines. I was spending 80 to 90% of my time on details of administration because systems were weak. We used to have no clear rationale for what we did. We did things and they would work, but we didn't know why. We've been trying for the past two years to find ways to support creative ideas through good administration."

Building Strong Work Teams

When we help an assistance group that is having problems with its internal organization, we frequently ask members to construct a chart that shows how the work is divided up and who is responsible for getting it done. Their chart almost always reveals some characteristic problems.

First, as we've just suggested, the leader of the organization is frequently the person who is in fact making day-to-day decisions about every project and every administrative and management activity. Other people may be nominally in charge of helping the teachers at Taft School or writing a new brochure to describe the group's work, but they don't have any real authority and are constantly being overruled by the group's leader. When they are effective, top leaders point out a direction and define limits, but they don't become involved in redoing every detail of the group's work.

Second, in ineffective groups, it is unclear exactly who is working on what. Sometimes everyone is working on everything. Sometimes several people are each working in isolation on a specific project and each one communicates only with the group's leader. The difficulty that such a group has in drawing an organizational chart reflects underlying difficulties in the way the organization operates.

It might be almost inevitable that your assistance group runs into such organiza-

tional snarls at first. However, effective groups begin to deal with these problems, while ineffective groups allow them to multiply and to generate continuing crises.

To meet these problems, top leadership must perform a continual balancing act. Leaders must monitor staff activities, so that the work is carried out in ways consistent with the group's basic purposes and strategies, while at the same time developing work teams that are themselves headed by competent leaders. And these team leaders (or middle-level managers) must be increasingly able to work without constant intervention from top leadership.

A few characteristics of such effective work teams include:

Work teams with skilled leaders. In effective groups, a middle level of managers (or team leaders) clearly develops over time. These group members understand the purposes and strategies of the group and are trusted by top leadership. They have received consistent support and supervision in developing this understanding and skill, so that they are capable of directing important aspects of the group's work. In less effective groups, these middle-level leaders may have impressive titles on paper, but in fact the group's top leaders continue to decide all matters great and small, causing resentment and delay.

Work team size. In effective assistance groups much of the work is done by teams with two to seven members. When staff members work completely alone on tasks, the group's efforts become fragmented. Work teams much larger than seven members, on the other hand, are unwieldy.

Balancing coordination and independence. One way to insure that assistance group members don't become isolated and the work fragmented is to give people multiple responsibilities. United Bronx Parents required all program staff members to drop their normal work and help in a crisis, such as an escalated conflict between a parent group and a resistant school principal. However, a good thing can be carried too far. In groups where "everyone is in on everything," there is confusion, overload, and inability to focus sufficiently on any one task. We found that effective groups had reached some balance on the question of overlapping responsibilities. They had thought about each project and each staff member and decided to what extent multiple responsibilities were appropriate.

Splits between "headquarters" and "field" staff. One problem of fragmentation that groups must be particularly careful to avoid

is a split between those people who work directly with clients and those people who work in the headquarters of the organization in managerial, program development, or administrative jobs. All program staff members should have some direct contact with clients and participate to some extent in the development of plans for working with clients.

Clarifying jobs. Over time more effective groups developed a clear shared understanding, usually in writing, of the job responsibilities of individual staff members.

Look at Yourself — How Are You Organized to Do Your Work?

This exercise has two parts. In Part 1, you take a look at how you are organized to get your work done: how the work is divided up, who leads work groups, how responsibilities overlap, etc. In Part 2, you imagine some ways that work could be divided up better, agree on one specific suggestion for improvement, and make plans to carry it out.

The purpose of the exercise is to increase your understanding of how your organization is structured -- to see patterns that may have developed subtly over time -- and to consider some possible changes.

How Are You Organized to Do Your Work? Part 1

1. List on a chart like the one on the next page all the important activities your staff is involved in. Include specific assistance projects, administrative activities, planning, and fund raising.

2. Indicate for each of these activities who is responsible for heading it up, who is involved in carrying it out, and how it relates to other activities.

3. Review the chart to look for patterns.

The following questions might be helpful:

a. What general patterns do you see?
b. What issues arise about management responsibilities? Is it clear who is responsible to whom?
c. What issues arise about the nature and size of work teams?
d. What issues arise about overlapping responsibilities?
e. Is there a split between "headquarters" and the "field"?
f. Are people's responsibilities clear?

How Are You Organized to Do Your Work? Part 2

1. As individuals, look over the information you have recorded in completing the chart in Part 1.

2. Imagine a work week six months from now when some of the key problems you've identified would be solved. Write a page or two describing what the week would be like. Be very specific. How would things be organized? How would people relate to each other? What would they be doing differently day-by-day?

3. Have each person read their vision of this ideal week in the future to other group members and answer questions about it.

4. List on newsprint the specific changes that each person thinks are desirable, based on what they've written.

5. Choose a specific change that seems desirable to most group members and is also feasible. Develop specific plans for making this change.

GROUP ACTIVITY	WHO HEADS IT UP?	WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?	HOW DOES IT RELATE TO OTHER ACTIVITIES?
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT	TOM MASON COORDINATES MARY KELLOGG MONITORS CLOSELY AND MAKES MANY KEY DECISIONS.	STEVE WASHINGTON – ADVISOR AT ROOSEVELT AND DEWEY HIGH SCHOOLS. LILLY NIELSON – ADVISOR AT NEW HOPE AND GLENWOOD HIGH SCHOOLS.	OVERLAP IN ADVISORS WITH TEACHER WORKSHOP PROGRAM. STEVE AND LILLY ALWAYS CROSS-PRESSURED. TOM FEELS HE CAN'T ACT WITHOUT MARY'S OK, BUT SHE IS OFTEN BUSY ON FUND RAISING, ETC.
TEACHER WORKSHOP PROGRAM	LEADER NEEDS TO BE HIRED. MARY KELLOGG ACTING HEAD.	ROY NEAL – ABOUT 80%. STEVE W. – ABOUT 20%. LILLY N. – 20%	NOT AS POPULAR AS TWO YEARS AGO. ARE WE PUTTING ENERGY INTO IT THAT SHOULD BE SPENT ELSEWHERE?
TEACHER STORE	IRENE COWAN, SECRETARY.	—	WORKS WELL. IRENE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S DOING. KEEPS UP WITH ORDERING, ETC. UNDERSTANDS PURPOSE. PROVIDES GOOD BACK-UP FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES.

LOOK AT YOURSELF

Dividing Responsibility for Decision Making

We found no effective assistance group that operated as a collective of equals. Effective groups allocate decision-making responsibility among three levels of program staff. Top leadership maintains ultimate authority and actively sets standards and limits. Middle-level leadership takes increasing responsibility for important aspects of the group's work (like specific assistance projects or keeping the books), and trusted middle-level leaders grow to have substantial authority that does not constantly need to be overruled.

Other program staff members regularly help shape decisions as part of their work teams. When their ideas about changing the group's strategy and methods are based on an analysis of their experience in the field, these ideas are given serious consideration. For example, when teacher advisors in one group argued that the group's math curriculum units weren't clear to teachers, the group revised them following the advisors' suggestions.

All program staff are consulted about important decisions confronting the group (for example, the decision to apply for federal funds in a grant competition) so that their viewpoints will be clear; however, they do not have the power to overrule the group's top leadership.

The key to effective decision making appears to be clarity. It should be clear which decisions are characteristically made by top leadership, middle-level leadership, and other program staff. It should be clear how staff members will be consulted on important decisions; it is destructive to pretend that everyone is equal and that the group will decide an issue when this is untrue. Don't play games.

Creative Decision-Making Techniques

Most organizations waste enormous amounts of time by using inefficient methods for meeting, discussing solutions to problems, and making decisions. There are many handbooks that suggest ways that these decision-making and problem-solving activities can be carried out more efficiently. See, for example, The Second Handbook of Organization Development in Schools by Richard Schmuck and Philip Runkel (Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield, 1977).

Such handbooks suggest techniques for setting agendas, clarifying problems, making decisions, anticipating difficulties through role-playing, generating creative ideas through brainstorming, and so on. We found that effective assistance groups were experimenting with these techniques and were attempting to incorporate them into their work. We did not find that any one technique was essential. Instead, the key was the groups' willingness to experiment and to incorporate the methods that proved effective into their day-to-day work.

Look at Yourself — Who Decides What?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you sort out what types of decisions are made by top leadership, middle-level leadership, other program staff, and administrative support staff and to determine how you can achieve greater clarity about the division of decision-making responsibility.

Who Decides What?

1. On newsprint, reproduce and fill in the chart below.

2. Discuss the following questions:

   a. What differing perceptions surfaced in the course of completing this chart?

   b. How clear is the division of decision-making responsibility?

   c. What conflicts, if any, exist between the role that particular groups are playing in decision making and the role they want to play? Can they be resolved? How?

PEOPLE INVOLVED	IMPORTANT DECISIONS THEY MAKE	IMPORTANT DECISIONS THEY HAVE INPUT ON	PROBLEMS THIS GROUP SEES WITH THEIR DECISION-MAKING ROLE
Top leadership			
Middle-level leaders (GARY, TIM, RENE)	- SELECT SCHOOLS TO WORK WITH - SELECT ADVISORS AND OTHER STAFF - DAILY TACTICAL DECISIONS ABOUT TRAINING, FINAL SAY	- BUDGETS FOR THEIR PROJECTS - LONGER TERM PRIORITIES FOR ORGANIZATION	- SOMETIMES OVERRULED ON SCHOOL SELECTION -- AUTHORITY UNCLEAR - NO CLEAR PROCEDURE FOR BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND RELATION TO FUND RAISING UNCLEAR
Other program staff			
Support staff			

Careful Staff Selection Pays Off

Selecting program staff members is a pivotal task to which ineffective groups devote far too little time. It is much easier in the long run to identify and hire an effective staff person than to train and supervise someone who lacks essential skills and points of view. Further, firing an incompetent staff member is especially messy. If the person fired is an advisor, the firing usually has serious negative effects on work with clients.

We found two qualities to look for in the hiring process that are especially important. First, program staff members should accept the basic assumptions of the assistance group strategy. If the staff member is not really in tune with these group assumptions, enormous energies will be wasted in conflict. As one group member correctly predicted:

> "I foresee serious problems ahead with June [who had just been hired]. We believe that parents must be trained to be aggressive and to ask hard questions about what the schools are doing, but she is a former teacher who seems to end up taking the teacher's side or wanting to inject herself as a mediator between parents and teachers."

Our research confirms the old maxim that social (and educational) movements are made up of like-minded people.

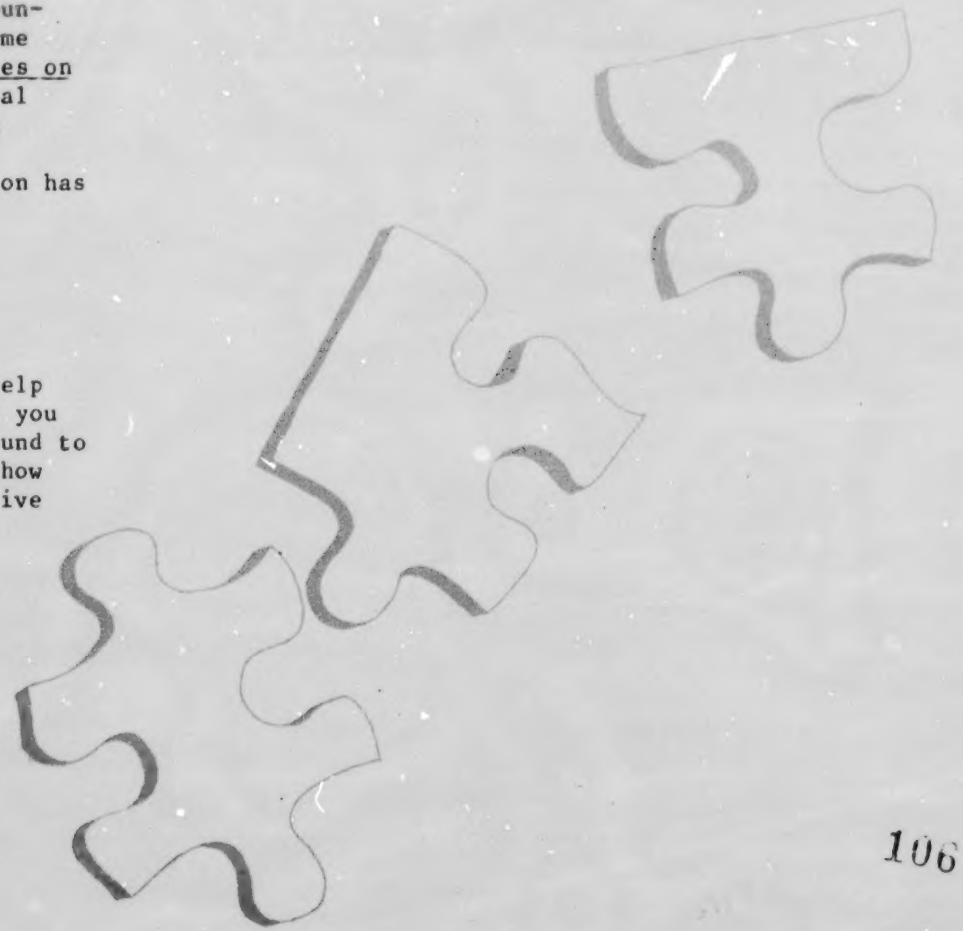
Second, prospective staff members should have already worked in the types of schools and communities where assistance will be provided. In some instances people with technical skills (writing, curriculum design) but without this practical experience have been hired by assistance groups. Although this sometimes works, it has frequently caused problems. Assistance groups are most effective when most of their program staff have a first-hand knowledge of the client's situation. Of course, if prospective staff members have actually worked as advisors and the quality of their past work has been attested to by clients, so much the better.

You can try a number of techniques to identify potential staff members. One is to look for candidates within a resource network of people who are doing assistance work similar to yours. Or you can draw staff members from the volunteers who have previously worked with the group, or promote from your current staff. And some groups have found good staff members simply by advertising either in the newspaper or in specialized publications.

In assessing a candidate's competence, it's a good idea to seek out information from people knowledgeable about the prospective staff member who were not suggested by the candidate. Plan interviews carefully and include questions or simulations that indicate how the candidate would handle real problems encountered in the assistance process. Some groups have hired promising candidates on a consultant basis, giving them a real task to do and getting feedback from clients about how well the task was completed. A little care in selection has great benefits later on.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Select Staff?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you assess the match between the way you select staff and the practices we found to work. Then, we ask you to consider how you might make greater use of effective staff selection practices.



How Do You Select Staff?

We have identified a list of practices that contribute to effective staff selection. Below is a chart that you can reproduce and fill in on newsprint. Down the side we have listed some practices that we recommend.

1. In the first column, make notes on the extent to which you have used these methods in the past. Jot down examples.
2. In the second column, list possible ways that you could use these practices in the future.

PRACTICES WE RECOMMEND	WAYS YOU HAVE DONE THIS IN THE PAST	WAYS YOU MIGHT DO THIS IN THE FUTURE
Overall, be careful and deliberate.	- HELD OFF ON HIRING CURRICULUM DEVELOPER DESPITE DEADLINE FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT - WIDE SEARCH FOR NEW MATERIALS DESIGNER WORKED WELL.	- INCLUDE SEARCH TIME WHEN ESTIMATING TIMETABLES FOR NEW PROTECTS. - REORGANIZE FILES OF PREVIOUS CANDIDATES SO THEY ARE USABLE. - DEVELOP STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR EVERYONE TO USE IN HIRING.
Look for people who share your basic values and sense of purpose.	- CONTACTED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PEOPLE IN KANSAS CITY AND ST LOUIS. - HIRED TWO TEACHERS WHO HAVE USED THE CURRICULUM SUCCESSFULLY	- BETTER INTERVIEWS. PUT SOME SIMULATION OF PROBLEMS INTO IT. - USE MORE OF OUR CONTACTS IN OTHER STATES.
Look for people who have worked in the types of settings in which you provide assistance.		

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PRACTICES WE RECOMMEND	WAYS YOU HAVE DONE THIS IN THE PAST	WAYS YOU MIGHT DO THIS IN THE FUTURE
Ideally, look for people who have previously worked as advisors.		
Use your resource networks to find good people.		
Bring good people from the ranks of volunteers or from present staff.		
Don't rely on recommendations from people named by the candidate; get other data too.		
Carefully plan interviews. Have the candidate discuss or simulate real problems that are part of providing assistance.		
Hire the candidate as a short-term consultant, assign a task and evaluate how well it's done.		

LOOK AT YOURSELF

Systematic Staff Training

Once new staff members are selected, it is essential that they participate in a carefully planned training program. Ineffective assistance groups rely on unplanned on-the-job training, but this haphazard approach cannot begin to introduce the new staff member to the group's complex assumptions and methods.

Your staff training program should consciously blend formal training workshops, opportunities to observe experienced staff in action, direct work experience, analysis of that experience, and written materials describing the nature of the group's work. This training process should take place over several months, so that the new staff member has a chance to move back and forth between the group's ideas and the reality of the work.

For example, /I/D/E/A/ carefully designed a program for training its advisors in which the advisors themselves set up an individualized learning program, working directly with children. United Bronx Parents trained its advisors through a constant interplay between direct assistance to parents and sessions to analyze how the assistance was progressing.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Train New Staff?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you compare the staff training methods we found effective with your present methods for staff training and to think about some changes.

How Do You Train New Staff?

We have identified five activities that should be blended into effective staff training. Below is a chart that you can reproduce and fill in on newsprint. Down the side we have listed the five types of activities we recommend.

1. In the first column, make notes on the extent to which you have used these methods in the past. Jot down examples.
2. In the second column, list possible ways that you could use these practices.

EFFECTIVE STAFF TRAINING ACTIVITIES	WAYS YOU HAVE DONE THIS IN THE PAST	WAYS YOU MIGHT DO THIS IN THE FUTURE
Formal training sessions	- SESSION BASED ON GROUP'S HISTORY AS DESCRIBED IN FEDERAL PROPOSAL - ROLE PLAY INITIAL MEETINGS WITH TEACHERS - QUESTIONS TEACHERS ASK, ETC	- FINISH OUR ANALYSIS OF COMPETENCIES FOR ADVISORY WORK. BUILD SESSION AROUND IT
Observing experienced staff in action	- MOSTLY BY CHANCE. NOTHING SYSTEMATIC	- HAVE NEW ADVISOR "SHADOW" EXPERIENCED ADVISOR FOR TWO WEEKS.
Direct experience in providing assistance and other work of the group	- HAS BEEN OUR MAIN APPROACH. SINK OR SWIM	- BEGIN BY TEAMING WITH EXPERIENCED ADVISOR
Analyzing observations and direct experiences		- REQUIRE NOTES AND SHORT WRITTEN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCE - PLANNED BUT NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH BEFORE.
Reading materials that illustrate the group's work		

Monitoring and Supervising Work

Effective assistance groups develop regular procedures for overseeing each person's work. Top leadership and the leaders of work groups regularly assess the quality of staff members' efforts. They visit teacher advisors in the schools to help them think about priorities and problems. They confront the parent advisor who is making parents overly dependent on her.

If strong work teams exist, supervision and feedback come from both leadership and peers, and is generally experienced as supportive rather than intrusive.

Ineffective assistance groups are reluctant to oversee work and to confront staff members who are not doing a good job. As a result, staff members grow to see supervision as an invasion of their turf and become defensive. People do their own thing until a serious crisis develops, then leadership swings from ignoring supervision to "cracking down." One assistance group leader described this erratic style: "I used to work from an insecure laissez-faire style until things fell apart, then I became a dictator."

Our field notes are filled with tense incidents related to the supervision issue. For example:

- An advisor was supposed to be helping parents in a city neighborhood organize a strong parent group, but evidence filtered back to his supervisor that he was actually spending very little time helping these parents. Yet he came from the neighborhood he was working in and had strong supporters there, so the assistance group's leadership was reluctant to confront him.

- A staff member was asked to prepare a draft of a funding proposal, but her supervisor felt the resulting draft was poor. Rather than review it with her and ask for changes, the supervisor simply rewrote the proposal herself.

- One assistance group with several advisors ran into embarrassing problems because advisors were not coordinating with each other and were telling school district staff different things. The coordinator of the advisors instituted a system of keeping written records of all contacts with the school district. One advisor complained that he had had no role in developing the forms and announced that he would not be filling these records out since he "was hired to help teachers, not fill out forms."

Look at Yourself — How Do You Oversee Your Work?

How do you handle the issue of overseeing people's work and the touchy problems that grow up around it? The purpose of the next exercise is to help you think about this issue by looking at some specific incidents from your own history.

How Do You Oversee Your Work?

1. Look at the examples we gave of touchy issues that arise in overseeing work. Think of two or three similar incidents that are part of your history.

2. Ask a person familiar with each incident to answer the following questions about it with notes on newsprint:
   a. What important events occurred in this incident and how did it come to a head?
   b. What were some important underlying causes of the incident?
   c. What lessons does the incident suggest for making the process of overseeing work more effective?

3. Use the presentations as the basis for a discussion of each incident.

4. Draw on the incidents to discuss the following questions about your overall approach to overseeing work:
   a. What are your characteristic patterns for overseeing work?
   b. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
   c. What are a few practical changes that could be made to begin to improve the process of overseeing work?

PROBLEM IN CASTLE HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT

A IMPORTANT EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 1-7 JERRY AND MARIE TOLD SCHOOL PRINCIPALS CONFLICTING THINGS ABOUT ADVISORY WORK FOCUS AND SCHEDULE. DIDN'T COORDINATE THEIR STORY

SEPTEMBER 10 SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT CALLS OUR OFFICE "WHAT IS GOING ON? DO YOU HAVE YOUR ACT TOGETHER?"

SEPTEMBER 12 LINDA CALLS MEETING OF LINDA, JERRY, AND MARIE TO DISCUSS PROBLEM HEATED MEETING JERRY SAYS LINDA OVER-REACTING - STIRS UP THEIR OLD CONFLICT LINDA LAYS OUT PLAN FOR RECORDING CONTACTS WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF SAYS IT MUST BE FOLLOWED

SEPTEMBER 13 JERRY REFUSES TO FILL OUT FORMS. SAYS HE WAS NOT HIRED TO FILL OUT FORMS LINDA SAYS HE MUST. JERRY RESIGNS.

B UNDERLYING CAUSES

- IN GENERAL ADVISORS HAVE NOT FORMALLY COORDINATED WORK. WITH SMALLER STAFF, IT WAS NEVER NECESSARY
- LONG CONFLICT BETWEEN JERRY ON ONE SIDE AND LINDA AND MARIE ON THE OTHER JERRY CREATIVE BUT HARD TO GET ALONG WITH
- LINDA LACKS EXPERIENCE AS SUPERVISOR. INCONSISTENT -- HAS BACKED DOWN IN DISPUTES UNTIL NOW.

Building Resource Networks

Effective assistance groups develop elaborate resource networks of people and organizations who can help them. These resource networks include contacts in the school communities that the assistance group is trying to change, in school district central offices, in state agencies and federal agencies that affect these school districts, in potential funding agencies, and in the political world whose representatives can be called on to lend legitimacy and give support in conflicts.

An important part of this network is the social or educational movement out of which the assistance group developed. For /I/D/E/A/, this was a network of progressive educators, including administrators. For AFRAM it was a national network of black political activists. For Creative Teaching Workshop it was a network of educators interested in experiential education.

The members of the network are a critical source of information and ideas, legitimacy, emotional support, potential staff members and consultants, potential clients, and funding leads. The usefulness of such networks illustrates once again that human systems often operate through personal and informal contacts rather than through formal procedures.

In building such networks, effective assistance groups recognize that they should not only concentrate on strong supporters. They recognize that the great majority of decision makers and potential resources will be indifferent to the things that the group feels strongly about. Effective assistance groups analyze who can be called on for what. One school administrator supplied a parent organizing group with critical budget information, not because he supported them, but because he was angry at his superiors. A state official endorsed the work of a teacher assistance project, not because she was particularly sympathetic to their efforts, but because she felt it would be good for her own image.

How are these networks built up? First, you should view every meeting -- every formal or informal contact with a school superintendent, government official, or active parent -- as an opportunity to build up your contacts. If you are invited to a conference, find out who is going to attend, figure out how they might help you, go early and stay late so you can get to know people informally.

Second, systematically decide what types of organizations you need more contacts in (private foundations, Congress, state education agencies) and start to make appointments and visit people. Once you've met them, send them your newsletter, invite them to the schools you're working in, call to ask their advice.

People who have large networks of useful resources build them deliberately and devote substantial energy to the task.

Look at Yourself — How Strong Is Your Resource Network?

What networks of contacts do you have? Where do you need more of them? This exercise will help you reflect on these issues.

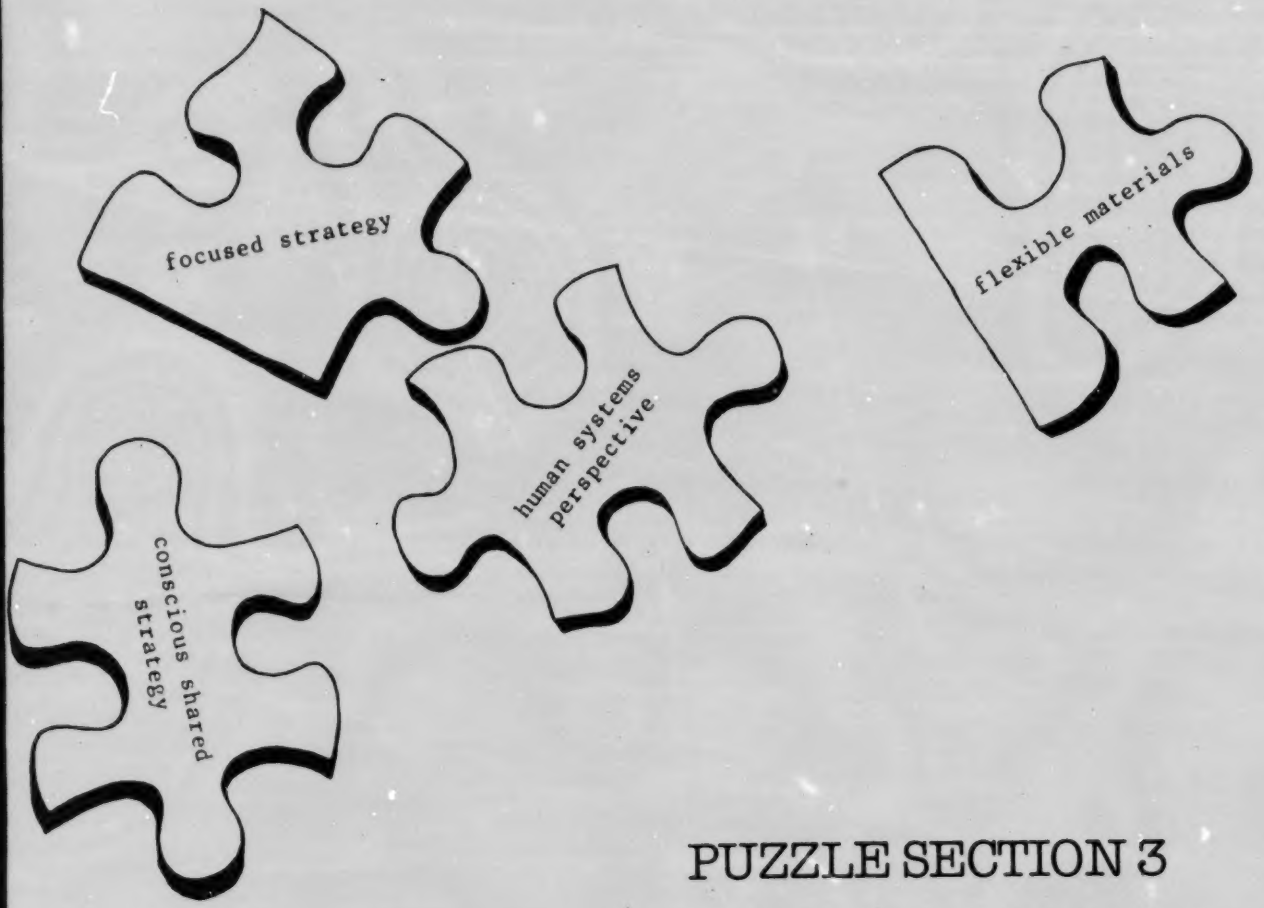
How Strong Is Your Resource Network?

1. On newsprint, list your key contacts in the following areas of activity:
   a. School communities where you work or want to work
   b. School district administration
   c. Groups or agencies doing work similar to your own
   d. Funding agencies
   e. Others important to your work

2. For each contact, fill in the following information:
   a. Who in your group has this contact?
   b. What sorts of help have they given you?
   c. How could you have used various resources more effectively in dealing with recent problems?

3. Review your list of contacts and consider:
   a. In what areas is your resource network weak?
   b. What steps could you take to expand your network in weak areas?

CONTACT	WHO KNOWS...	WHAT HAVE WE GOTTEN?	WHAT COULD WE HAVE GOTTEN?
MARIE VALENTINE, STAFF DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR	MARCIA, CHRIS	CONSISTENT ACCURATE INSIDE INFORMATION - WHO MADE DECISIONS ABOUT OUR WORKING WITH SCHOOLS, WHAT TO SAY TO SUPERINTENDENT, THAT DR CROSS WAS LEAVING	NOT MUCH MORE WE ALWAYS CALL HER WHEN WE WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON
DR CROSS	CHRIS	- CONTACT FOR FUNDS AT STATE DEPT. - LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR PROPOSAL	NOW THAT HE'S RETIRED, MAY FEEL HE COULD TELL US MORE ABOUT HIS FUNDING CONTACTS
PHYLLIS VANFLEET, CROSS' SECRETARY	PAT	HAS ALWAYS GIVEN US COPIES OF BOARD DECISIONS, PLANNING MEMOS, BUDGETS EVEN IF IT WAS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR THEY WERE PUBLIC.	COPY OF FEDERAL PROPOSAL DRAFT, SO WE COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED WHERE WE MIGHT FIT IN



PUZZLE SECTION 3

Refining a School Improvement Strategy

An assistance group can, of course, send advisors out to work with school staff or parents with a general charge to "be helpful" and to use whatever talents the advisors have to improve the schools. This approach may sound appealing. But our research indicated again and again that it doesn't work.

Effective assistance groups develop over time an explicit shared school improvement strategy. We use the term "strategy" as an umbrella to cover an assistance group's answers to three major questions:

- What is wrong with the schools?
- How can the school community be changed to address these problems?
- What should the assistance group do to bring about these changes?

Rural Education Program developed one set of answers to these questions. They decided that the root of educational problems in rural America was that rural educators and citizens do not have the opportunity or the skills to decide for themselves what their most pressing educational problems are, identify possible solutions, try these solutions out, and evaluate the results. To meet this problem, REP developed and tested a "systematic process for decision making . . . which allow[s] for the open consideration of alternatives for meeting defined needs." Convinced of the need for collaboration between educators and citizens, REP advisors worked with both groups, striving to be viewed as fair and neutral.

They identified a set of decision-making skills (for instance, interviewing, questionnaire development, report writing) which they taught through their formal and informal contacts with clients. And because they wanted to teach rural educators and citizens a process for decision making, their advisors consistently refused to advocate a particular solution to local problems, even when pressed by frustrated school administrators or parent leaders.

The specifics of your school improvement strategy may be much different from the one proposed by Rural Education Program. The other assistance groups we studied were at odds with REP in their analysis of what is wrong with the schools, how they could be better, and how an assistance group could bring about improvements. But all effective groups developed increasingly specific answers to these questions.

Refining a school improvement strategy is the third major section of the assistance work puzzle. The Rate Yourself chart that follows helps you see how well you've put this strategy development section together.

Critical Tasks for Refining a School Improvement Strategy

		not at all what you do ... exactly what you do
focus on refining a strategy	The assistance group consistently works to refine a strategy for changing the schools. This strategy includes an analysis of what is wrong with the schools, how the school community can be changed to address these problems, and what the assistance group should do to bring about these changes. (#3-1)	-3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3
cycle of assistance & analysis	The assistance group carries out a regular cycle of assisting clients and analyzing those assistance efforts and their effects on school communities. (#3-2)	-3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3
initial period of direct assistance	Initially, the assistance group carries out about three years of direct assistance and analysis of that assistance. (#3-3)	-3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3
conscious shared strategy	After the initial period, the assistance group spells out a conscious shared school improvement strategy much clearer than the original one. The implications of this strategy for the advisors' actions in specific situations are clearly understood and consistently acted on by assistance group staff. (#3-4)	-3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3
second period of direct assistance	The assistance group carries out assistance for an additional period of about three years in which strategy is further refined. (#3-5)	-3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3

RATE YOURSELF

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
leadership interprets strategy	The assistance group's top leadership establishes themselves as the legitimate interpreters of the group's strategy and the limits it involves, while helping the group to analyze its experience and adapt the strategy over time. (#3-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
human systems perspective	The assistance group analyzes its school districts and communities as human systems. Assistance group members become increasingly able to predict the effects of their action on all parts of these systems. (#3-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
central aspects of human systems	The assistance group's strategy focuses on central, not peripheral, aspects of the human systems involved. (#3-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
focused strategy	The assistance group makes the aspects of the schools they most want to change the target of detailed plans for improvement, well-developed tactics, and a significant proportion of advisor time. (#3-9)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
school principal is key	The assistance group's strategy recognizes the central position of the school principal in almost any change process. (#3-10)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

LOOK AT YOURSELF

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
insiders or outsiders	Advisors understand in what ways they are insiders or outsiders with their clients. They build on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of their position. (#3-11)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
adjusting to local situations	The assistance group adjusts its strategy to meet local needs and constraints without changing essential parts. (#3-12)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
clear language for key ideas	The assistance group finds a language and method for making key terms and ideas clear to clients. (#3-13)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
flexible materials	The assistance group develops and uses flexible sets of materials to aid in the assistance process. These materials are part of an overall system and consistent in their format, but are made up of separate booklets, flyers, etc. dealing with specific topics. (#3-14)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

For Discussion

- **Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?**
- **Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>good job</u>. What factors account for your effectiveness?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>poor job</u>. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?**

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

Focus on Refining a Strategy

When we discussed the formation of assistance groups (pages 39 to 44), we indicated that the founding leaders of effective assistance groups begin with a clear strategy for changing the schools. This strategy includes an analysis of what is wrong with the schools, how the school community can be changed to make things better, and what the assistance groups should do to bring about change.

Each of these three main parts of a school improvement strategy suggests many related issues. An adequate analysis of what the assistance group can do to bring about change, for example, should include a clear statement about whom the assistance group considers its major clients. United Bronx Parents, for instance, were adamant in their view that UBP meant "parents helping parents," and as parent advocates they rejected efforts to make them mediators with school officials.

Having identified their major clients, an assistance group must also be clear about what skills and knowledge they want to teach these clients, so that the clients themselves can work for the needed improvements in the schools. United Bronx Parents believed that parents needed confidence in confronting school officials and skills in analyzing very thoroughly the strengths and weaknesses of a school's educational program, principal, staff, and physical plant. The specific ways in which UBP advisors worked with parents day-to-day reflected their priorities. A major parent training activity entailed helping parents develop a set of questions to investigate in their local school, going to the school with parents to answer these questions through interviews and observations, and then meeting with parents to analyze the information parents had gathered and to plan another school visit.

Initially, an assistance group's strategy may lack specifics and have some holes in it, but it is clear enough to provide a definite direction for the group's work. For example, Creative Teaching Workshop began as a teachers' center where interested teachers from all over New York City came to attend workshops and share ideas about active learning projects for children. CTW advisors brought this focus on experiential learning and these techniques for working with teachers into their first efforts at long-term assistance in specific New York schools. However, it was some time before the advisors worked out how their initial strategy could be played out with the whole staff of a public school rather than a self-selected group of interested teachers.

Initial Period of Direct Assistance

Beginning with such key ideas, an effective group then launches on a period of about three years of direct work with clients. For

Center for New Schools, this initial work was spent in establishing Metro High School in Chicago. For /I/D/E/A/, it involved providing advisory help to 40 public schools in Ohio, Florida, New York, and Michigan. Through such direct work, the group's strategy is tested and refined, with lessons from one year translated into different tactics in the next.

Conscious Shared Strategy

We found an attitude among effective advisors that they must "make sense" of their efforts, must pull them together to understand their experience. As one assistance group leader said, "We made a lot of mistakes at first, but we learned a lot too. Now I think we're clear about what kinds of schools we can actually help, what we're aiming for in our work with a school, how we go about it day-to-day, what are the traps to avoid."

In an effective group, the leadership and the other key program staff act with increasing clarity by spelling out a conscious shared strategy in detail.

Second Period of Direct Assistance

In the groups we studied, this coherent refined statement of a school improvement strategy frequently marked the beginning of a second period of assistance to school staffs or parent groups. The process of testing and refining continued, but major elements of the strategy had been firmly established. For instance, /I/D/E/A/ had by this point in their development defined 35 outcomes for Individually Guided Education and developed initial versions of resource materials describing how an IGE school operates. They were also clear enough about the IGE approach to begin a major effort to train professionals from state departments of education and from universities to act as IGE advisors in their own states and communities.

Look at Yourself — How Clear Is Your Strategy for Improving Schools?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you clarify what your group's school improvement strategy is, how clear it is, and how useful it is in dealing with dilemmas you confront in providing assistance. In Part 1, your group's leadership puts some key points of your strategy in writing, and staff members then ask some questions about this statement. In Part 2, we pose some common problem situations that assistance groups encounter, and we ask you to see how useful your strategy is in guiding your response to these problems.

How Clear Is Your Strategy for Improving Schools? Part 1

1. Your group's leaders should prepare a statement of about five pages, answering the following questions:
   a. What is wrong with the schools?
   b. How can the school community be changed to address these problems?
   c. What should your assistance group do to bring about these changes?

2. Allow the rest of the staff to read the statement in advance, and then meet to discuss it. Initially staff members should ask clarification questions (What do you mean when you say . . . ?). Then they should move to a discussion of the statement which could include questions like the following:
   a. What key points does the statement identify that are most crucial to your strategy?
   b. What aspects of your strategy are a little cloudy and need further clarification?
   c. To what extent were program staff aware of the positions taken in the statement?
   d. Are there ideas that staff members feel should be incorporated into the statement that reflect what you do in practice but haven't been spelled out formally in the past?

3. After discussing the statement, see how useful your strategy is in dealing with the situations described in Part 2.

1. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE SCHOOLS?
   - FUNDAMENTALLY THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE SCHOOLS ONLY DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH CHILDREN WHO FALL WITHIN A NARROW RANGE OF "NORMALITY," BUT CHILDREN WHO ARE DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF RACE, INCOME, HANDICAP, OR SEX OFTEN RECEIVE INFERIOR EDUCATIONS.
   - ALL CHILDREN, BUT PARTICULARLY CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, REQUIRE CONTINUITY IN THEIR LEARNING PROGRAM. HOWEVER, THE TYPICAL SCHOOL IS HIGHLY <u>FRAGMENTED</u> IN THE WAY IT PROVIDES SERVICES TO CHILDREN. INDIVIDUALS TEACH ENGLISH, COMPENSATORY READING, BILINGUAL EDUCATION, ALGEBRA,

How Clear Is Your Strategy for Improving the Schools? Part 2

1. Now try your hand at some typical problems that advisors face in working with clients. (Use the first list if you work mostly with school staffs and the second list if you work mostly with parents.) Based on your strategy, how would you handle these problems?

2. As you discuss possible alternatives, think about the following:

   a. Do particular problem situations relate clearly to key elements in your strategy -- e.g., crucial things you want to change about the schools or crucial skills you want your clients to develop? What is this relationship?

   b. Do you have some tactics that you typically use in dealing with the problem situations we have described? What are they?

   c. Does the discussion of these problem situations reveal any issues that you feel should be clarified about your school improvement strategy?

WORKING WITH SCHOOL STAFFS

- A school principal calls and says he has heard about your work. He has an inservice day scheduled for next week and he would like you to come to do a two-hour workshop. How do you respond?
- In working with teachers on a new reading curriculum, you pick up evidence of a high rate of student absenteeism and a high dropout rate. You check school records and your impression is confirmed. But when you casually mention the problem to some teachers, they uniformly express the opinion that their job is to teach the kids "who come ready to learn." What do you do?
- You have agreed to work in a school where the principal promised to be supportive by freeing up teachers to work with you during their preparation period. You have just found out that she has not kept her word, and there are other signals that she is beginning to feel threatened by your presence in the school. What do you do?

WORKING WITH PARENTS

- An active parent group has one strong leader who wants you to deal directly with him and becomes uncomfortable when you begin to work with other members of the group. What do you do?
- A parent group you are helping says that they have just heard about some money that they might get and they need a proposal written right away. They say they are too busy to write it and that you could do it easily. This is the second time that they have made such a request. What do you do?
- You have been trying to help a parent group solve a special education problem and you are helping them analyze who makes certain key decisions within the school district. The leader of one faction in the group challenges you -- saying that "grassroots folks don't have time for all these technicalities. We need to act." What do you do?
- You have been advising a parent group about a problem they have been having with an incompetent teacher. The principal of the school approaches you after a meeting and says she would like to sit down with you personally to see if the two of you can make some progress on the problem. What do you do?

Cycle of Assistance and Analysis

Absolutely crucial to the strategy development process is a regular cycle of analysis and assistance. The group makes a plan, goes out and does something, and then sits down and talks about how things went. Then they make adjustments based on their analysis. Over time, a crucial part of this analysis focuses on whether the group is bringing about the changes in the school community envisioned in their school improvement strategy.

This analysis process can be accomplished in many formal and informal ways. The staff of United Bronx Parents, operating in a crisis-ridden situation, insisted on a disciplined method of analysis. They consistently sat down before an important meeting or other event and planned what they were going to do, often role-playing to anticipate problems. After the event they would immediately sit down again to review how things went, what the next steps were, and how things could have been done better.

Rural Education Program held formal "debriefing" sessions after important training events. These sessions brought together people who had been directly involved as advisors and others on the staff who had not been involved. Another group held formal analysis sessions, but also used the time spent traveling by car from one rural town to another to analyze how things had gone.

If your group can actually carry out this analysis and assistance cycle day-to-day, and does in fact alter subsequent work in the light of your analysis, this is one of the strongest indicators we found that your group will be effective.

Of course, everyone acknowledges the importance of analysis. Ineffective groups, however, never seem to get around to it. They make plans to analyze their work, but they don't. Or personal conflicts keep people from talking informally about how things went. Some groups have all the trappings of research and evaluation, and one might think that this information would provide a basis for improving their work. Looking closely, however, we find that the research and evaluation are not generating useful information or are not taken seriously.

Another common failing is that the leaders of an assistance group lay out an elaborate school improvement strategy on paper; however, close examination shows that the strategy is not put into practice by the staff. When ideas on paper are divorced from daily advisory work, lessons learned by individual advisors remain mere personal learning and do not contribute to building the shared strategy of the group.

Over time, an important focus of the self-analysis process is a hard assessment of whether the assistance work is bringing about

the desired changes in specific school communities. How many schools have adopted Individually Guided Education and how many are actually carrying it out? Has the number of students being suspended from school in the South Bronx dropped? How often do parents trained by AFRAM really begin to take independent initiative to change their local schools?

Effective groups confront this hard evidence and modify their approach. Ineffective groups ignore evidence about ineffectiveness and fall into a rut. They often lose sight of their goals for improving the schools and hold on defensively to specific methods of assistance (for instance, a particular type of workshop they're used to giving, or a set of steps they insist that clients take to solve a problem).

Look at Yourself — Analyzing Your Assistance Projects

We have just discussed the importance of developing a regular cycle of analysis and assistance in your work, so that you can learn from your experience. In this exercise, you carry out this analysis process by drawing some lessons from previous assistance efforts.

Analyzing Your Assistance Projects

1. Select two important assistance projects that you have carried out in the past (e.g., your work with a specific school staff or parent group over a period of a year or more). On a chart like the one below, list some important lessons from this experience about how you can be more effective in carrying out your school improvement strategy.

2. Discuss the following questions:
   a. How clear were these lessons at the time you were working on the project?
   b. What are some specific changes you might make in your future assistance efforts in light of these lessons?

3. Choose one or two lessons from past work that have clear, feasible implications for the future. Make plans for improving future work in light of your analysis of your past experience.

ASSISTANCE PROJECT	LESSONS FROM THE PROJECT	SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK
BRENDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER ASSISTANCE	-PRINCIPAL CANNOT JUST BE LUKE-WARM. NEED STRONG SUPPORT FROM HER.	-CAN ONLY WORK IN SCHOOLS WHERE PRINCIPAL IS ENTHUSIASTIC. TEST BY ASKING FOR CONCESSIONS ON SCHEDULING, ETC.
	- REQUIRING TEACHERS TO ATTEND FIRST WORKSHOP TURNED MANY OFF FROM START. WORKSHOPS HAVE TERRIBLE REPUTATION.	- DO INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR WORKSHOP AND GET AT CONCERNS BETTER.
	- NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE SUPERFICIAL. DIDN'T GET AT REAL TEACHER CONCERNS.	

Human Systems Perspective

We explained earlier (see pages 30 to 31) that effective assistance groups develop a sophisticated capacity to understand the school community as a human system. /I/D/E/A/ expresses this idea as follows:

> "The school is the strategic unit for educational change. It contains all the elements for carrying out instructional and learning functions. Further, unless the school as a unit is supportive of change, individual attempts to change are usually frustrated. The culture of the school is central both to understanding and to affecting educational improvement. Continuous school improvement begins by building an allegiance to norms and expectations that support the staff's search for improved methods."

Rural Education Program states it this way:

> "Change strategy should focus not on individual or piecemeal change, but recognize the complex interrelationships between students, the teaching act, the structure of schooling, and the nature of the community setting and should focus in a comprehensive way on influencing all these factors."

When an assistance group is effective, their <u>understanding of the school community as a human system becomes increasingly explicit</u>. Generally an assistance group has an initial familiarity with one group in the school community -- progressive teachers, for instance, or Puerto Rican parents. Efforts to help these people, however, draw reactions or set up barriers in the rest of the school community and beyond, reactions which the assistance group may not have anticipated. One group's effort to assist a young progressive school principal brought on the animosity of central office administrators, whom the group had simply ignored. Parent advisors from another group were attracted to parent groups with strong charismatic leaders, but they began to realize that such leaders often block efforts to develop the leadership skills of other parents.

Over time, you have to become increasingly accurate in understanding how the school, the local community, the school district central office, the local political organization, the federal government, the teachers' union, etc., are interrelated and how they affect your struggle for better schools. You should also be able to <u>predict</u> pretty accurately how your activities will affect all parts of the school community. <u>Thus problems can be anticipated -- and consciously chosen</u>. In

other words, you need to develop an increasingly accurate mental map of how the school community functions as a human system.

Central Aspects of Human Systems

As this mental map becomes increasingly detailed, the next step is to zero in on those parts of the system that are most critical to change. /I/D/E/A/ realized that for its strategy of individualized instruction to work, there had to be a reorganization of the teaching staff to overcome the isolation of individual teachers. Therefore, /I/D/E/A/'s strategy began with the reorganization of the traditional school into learning communities taught by teams of three to five teachers. This basic change in the school as a human system facilitated the other changes in instruction advocated by /I/D/E/A/.

AFRAM and United Bronx Parents understood that school staff usually have a great deal of hostility and fear concerning the presence of parents in the school. Thus, a key goal of both groups was to change the teachers' belief that parents don't belong there. They encouraged parents to create a regular "presence" in the school that generally came to be expected and accepted.

Focused Strategy

Having identified which aspects of the system you want to change, you should begin to make them the subject of specific plans for improvement, detailed strategy and tactics, and a significant percentage of advisor time.

Basic changes are often threatening, and it is quite natural that people will try to divert you from changing major aspects of their human systems. Many assistance groups are sidetracked into working on peripheral matters. Creative curriculum units that were supposed to transform the whole curriculum become gimmicks for students who have finished their regular lessons. Hopes for a basic change in parent-teacher relationships dissipate into showcase meetings in which the teachers explain the school program while parents listen.

Effective assistance groups develop methods to keep from being diverted. As we discussed earlier (see pages 24 to 26), good advisors spend their limited time working on the issues of most importance to them.

School Principal Is Key

When you analyze your school community as a human system, pay special attention to the

school principal. In studying /I/D/E/A/, we found that the commitment of the school principal to individualized instruction was the single most important factor in determining whether it was carried out. Looking at the advisory work of Creative Teaching Workshop, we reached the same conclusion. Similarly, groups that tried to organize and motivate parents were constantly facing the principal's power to either encourage or discourage change.

Assistance groups who initially fail to take the school principal into account eventually learn that they must anticipate the principal's reaction to every plan they make.

For example, Center for New Schools helped parents and teachers in one Hispanic neighborhood to set up an alternative school program within a local high school. Although the school's principal initially approved the program in general, he would not be pinned down on specific staffing issues. Subsequently, he blocked the parents' choice for program director and assigned teachers in the program extra duties that didn't allow them enough time to plan and coordinate the alternative program's activities. In retrospect, the advisors felt they should have confronted the principal about these issues, which killed the alternative program.

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Look at Yourself — How Detailed Are Your Maps of School Communities?

This exercise has two parts, both aimed at helping you sharpen your skills in mapping the human systems within school communities you are trying to change. In Part 1, we ask you to draw and analyze a diagram of the many groups and individuals who affect what happens in a specific school community you are familiar with. In Part 2, you zero in on a few of these groups and individuals, taking stock of what you know about them and what you'd like to find out.

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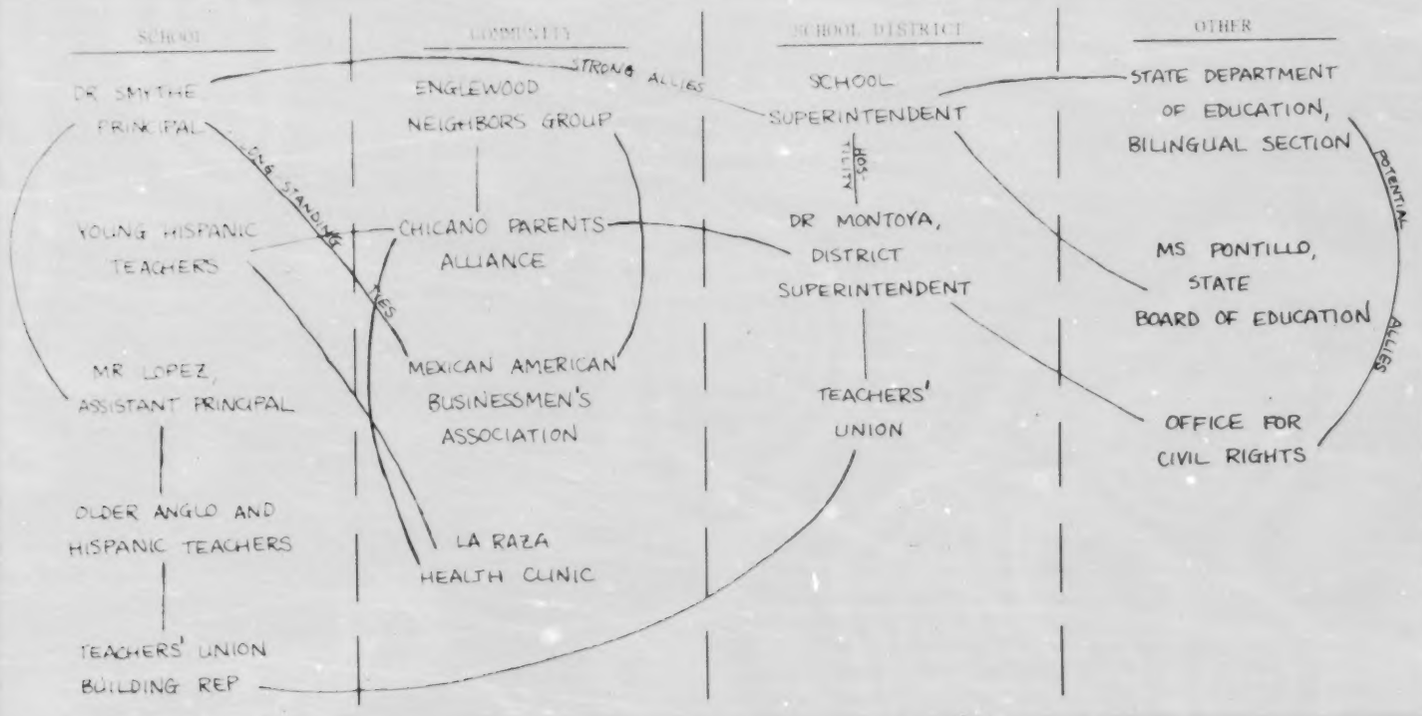
How Detailed Are Your Maps of School Communities? Part 1

1. Choose a school community that most of your group is familiar with.

2. Make a diagram like the one below, indicating key people, organizations, subgroups, factions that are important to take into account in trying to bring about change. Make a few notes on the diagram about each one.

3. Draw lines and make notes indicating some key relationships between the boxes on the diagram (don't try to show every single relationship).

4. Discuss some implications of this information for making your school improvement strategy more effective.



How Detailed Are Your Maps of School Communities? Part 2

1. From your mapping of groups and individuals in the previous exercise, choose three or four of the most important ones.

2. Create a chart like the one below.

3. Discuss some concrete steps you could take to gain the type of information you would like to have now but don't.

GROUP, PERSON, OR ORGANIZATION	THINGS YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM	THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW	IF YOU BE/SHE WOULD
DR SMYTHE, THE PRINCIPAL	- LET US IN UNDER PRESSURE - DOESN'T BELIEVE IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION. - PRESSURES TEACHERS WHO WORK WITH US - CLOSE TIES WITH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION.	- WHERE DID HE COME FROM BEFORE BEING MADE PRINCIPAL? - WHO ARE HIS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES WITHIN SYSTEM? - ARE THERE ANY IDEAS ABOUT REFORM HE'S INTERESTED IN?	SUGGESTED COMMUNITY MEETING TO PROTEST HIS OPPOSITION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION USE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION TO MOBILIZE SUPPORTERS. TRIED TO MAKE HEADWAY WITH SOME OF THE ANGLO TEACHERS LET THEM KNOW INFORMALLY NOT TO WORK WITH US
DR MONTOYA, THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT	- STRONG COMMITMENT TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION. - WILLING TO TAKE RISKS	- HOW STRONG IS SUPPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS? - HOW MUCH DOES HE KNOW ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE SCHOOL?	MET WITH HIM INFORMALLY TO DISCUSS SITUATION. ?

Adjusting to Local Conditions

Assistance groups are most effective when they have a coherent strategy and a set of guidelines for action in specific situations, yet allow for important areas of flexibility to meet local conditions. Each of the groups we studied had features built into its school improvement strategy that allowed for this flexibility. AFRAM was very specific about its long-term goals for school improvement and about the role its advisors should play, but it was equally insistent that short-term objectives and tactics should be developed by parents themselves.

/I/D/E/A/ was specific about the desirable social organization of a school and the procedures for individualizing the learning program, but adamantly refused to develop curriculum materials or to specify desirable curriculum content. Rural Education Program focused on changing the procedures by which school communities solved problems but refused to take positions about which problems or which solutions a local school community should decide to work on.

Effective assistance groups are sensitive to local conditions and constraints and adapt their strategy to meet them. For example, /I/D/E/A/ called for teachers to voluntarily support the shift to individualized instruction and suggested that teachers who were not interested should be transferred to other schools. But in one school district the teachers' contract precluded such transfers. Therefore, the advisor suggested the school be organized into two sections: those who were willing to adopt the individualized approach worked in teams, in an open space arrangement, and those who wished to retain the traditional approach continued to teach in self-contained classrooms. Then parents were given a choice as to which type of learning program they wished their children to enter. This is an example of a creative adjustment of a change strategy to meet local constraints. It illustrates the balance between standing firm and giving ground that effective assistance groups achieve (see pages 27 to 29).

Look at Yourself — How Can You Adapt to Local Conditions?

How do local conditions and constraints affect your work and how can you adjust to them creatively without compromising your basic objectives? This exercise will help you think through these issues in light of your own experience.

How Can You Adapt to Local Conditions?

1. Brainstorm a list of local conditions or constraints that have affected your work in the past. Take into account local practices, local culture, crises, teachers' union agreements, tight finances, political situations, etc.

2. For each one, propose some ways that you could adjust to this constraint without sacrificing the essential elements of your strategy.

CONSTRAINTS	POSSIBLE WAYS TO ADJUST
• NO MONEY FOR SUBSTITUTES SO TEACHERS CAN ATTEND WORKSHOPS.	• SUGGEST ADMINISTRATORS OR TEACHER AIDES COVER CLASSES (IS THIS LEGAL?).
• TWO SCHOOL BOARD FACTIONS. IF WE GET IDENTIFIED WITH ONE SIDE, THE OTHER IS AUTOMATICALLY OPPOSED.	• APPROACH BOTH SIDES PRIVATELY. LEVEL WITH THEM. APPEAL TO SELF-INTEREST. CAN BOTH SOMEHOW TAKE CREDIT?
• TEACHERS' UNION RULES ABOUT MANDATORY INSERVICE -- STRICTLY LIMIT TO THREE A YEAR.	• CAN WE GET SOME TEACHERS' UNION BUILDING REPS ON OUR SIDE? WHO? WHAT ABOUT VOLUNTARY MEETINGS?
• SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT ON WAY OUT. NO ONE WANTS TO ACT UNTIL THEY KNOW WHO WILL SUCCEED HIM.	• SHOULD WE JUST WAIT? GET TO POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR FROM INSIDE THE SYSTEM TO GET HER SUPPORT?

Clear Language for Key Ideas

In working with clients, you have to talk in a language they understand. Many important ideas on which school improvement strategies are based are outside the everyday experience of clients; most people, for example, think of a school as a building, classrooms, teachers, and books, not as a set of unwritten rules and power relationships.

Without effective ways to communicate your key ideas, you will be seen as spouting jargon or being impractical -- especially if assistance group members develop shorthand ways to communicate and forget that this language has no meaning to people outside the organization.

For example, one group confused teachers with social science jargon; they told the teachers that "social roles and norms constrain systemic change." Things went better when they translated these ideas into simpler English. "Roles" became "what we expect people to do who have a specific job." "Norms" became "unwritten rules people live by."

We recommend that you spend a good deal of time identifying the key terms and ideas you wish to use with clients, and thinking about practical ways to get these ideas across. Other groups have found the following methods helpful in communicating key ideas:

carefully designed written materials, audio-visual materials, simulations and role playing, case studies of problem situations, and a consistent practice of pointing out examples of key concepts when they are illustrated by events in the school community.

Look at Yourself — Do You Communicate Key Ideas Clearly?

How clear are the key terms you use in working with clients? This exercise will help you identify some of these terms and test your ability to communicate them effectively.

Do You Communicate Key Ideas Clearly?

1. List five to ten key terms and ideas that you most want to get across when you work with clients.

2. As a group, define each one on newsprint to make sure you share the same definitions and to state them as simply as possible. Note carefully any points of confusion or disagreement; they are probably confusing your clients.

3. Bring in an outsider -- the type of principal, teacher, or parent who might be your client (don't choose someone you've worked with in the past or someone sympathetic to you).

4. Explain your approach to improving schools to this person, using your key terms and ideas. Ask the person to stop you or to make a note everytime something isn't clear.

5. Use this feedback to improve your explanations and to think about ways you can get your key ideas across better to your clients.

TERM OR IDEA	DEFINITION -- AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE
MULTI-UNIT SCHOOL	INSTEAD OF GRADE LEVELS, THE SCHOOL IS DIVIDED INTO UNITS. EACH UNIT HAS A PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF 3-6 TEACHERS, 1-2 AIDES, AND 75-150 CHILDREN. TYPICALLY, THERE'S A THREE-YEAR AGE RANGE AMONG THE CHILDREN IN A UNIT.
IGE LEARNING PROCESS	INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED EDUCATION (IGE) IS A FOUR-STEP CYCLE CONSISTING OF (1) ASSESSMENT, (2) CHOOSING OBJECTIVES, (3) LEARNING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, AND (4) REASSESSMENT. THIS CYCLE IS REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN, IN EACH SUBJECT, FOR EACH PUPIL.

Flexible Materials to Support Assistance

Well prepared audio-visual and written materials can bear much of the burden of communicating your ideas clearly and consistently. The materials we find effective are put together with some care.

First, each set has a distinctive overall format that can clearly be identified with the group. The consistent format makes the group seem legitimate, giving clients the sense that the group's approach is comprehensive and that they have foreseen typical client problems.

Second, these materials are flexible. Advisors can give clients a short handout, booklet, or filmstrip focused on a specific issue, instead of handing them a thick book. This flexibility allows the materials to be regularly revised, updated, and added to, since the parts are relatively independent of each other.

We have already mentioned United Bronx Parents' colorful one-page handouts that analyze specific concerns or problems parents confront in trying to improve schools. /I/D/E/A/ has carefully written and field tested a set of short handbooks and filmstrips that deal with problems that arise in implementing Individually Guided Education

(such as needed changes in the principal's role). AFRAM wrote a series of "thought stimulators" for parents that were sent out on a regular basis; these stimulators explained basic AFRAM ideas about how the schools could be improved.

Look at Yourself — How Useful Are Your Materials?

How helpful are the materials you use? Which materials would it be helpful for you to prepare? This exercise will help you take stock.

How Useful Are Your Materials?

1. Assemble the brochures, handouts, handbooks, and whatever other materials you use ir working with clients. Look them over.

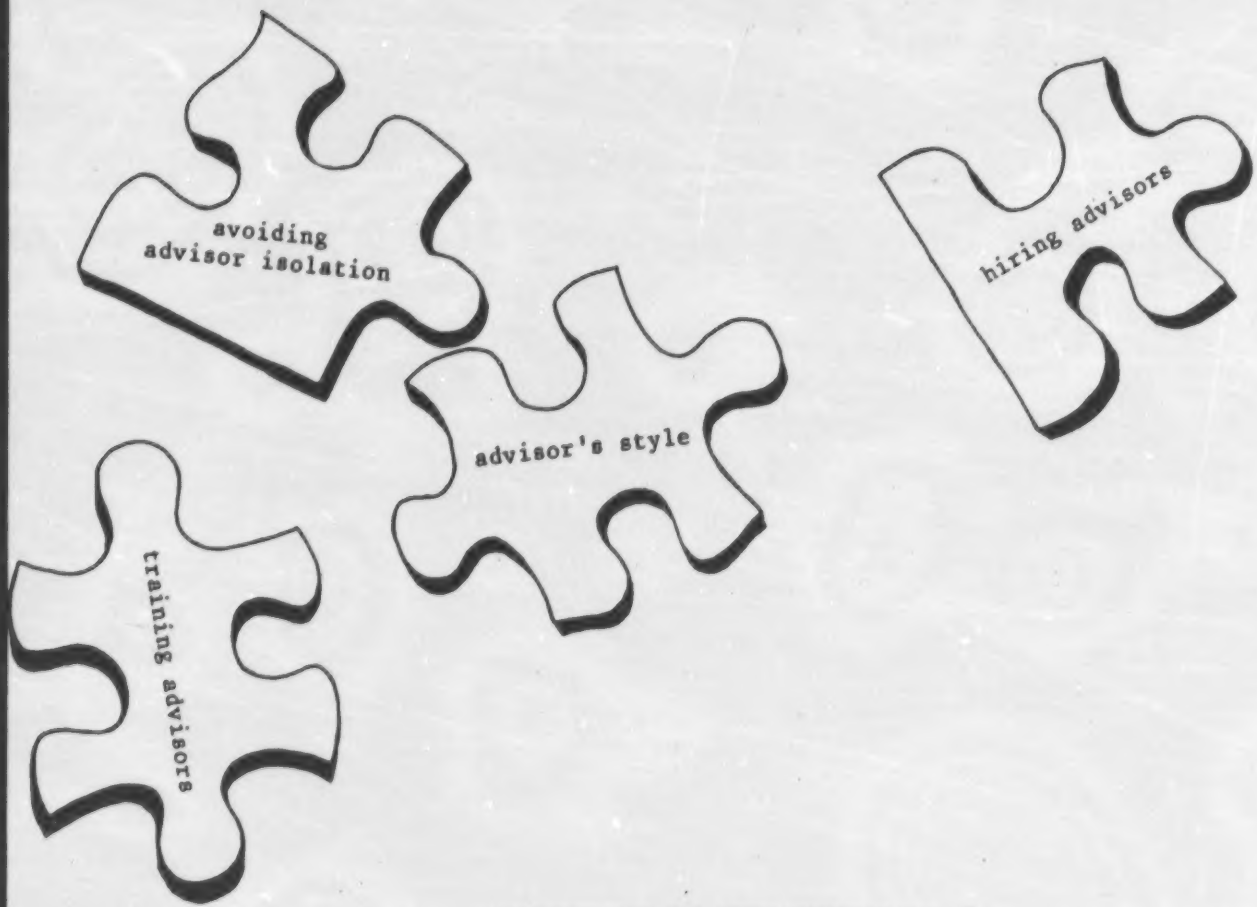
2. Answer the following questions about them:
   a. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your present materials?
   b. Are there other materials that already exist (in proposals, memos, etc.) that might be turned into useful materials for direct assistance?
   c. If you could prepare five to ten short handouts, manuals, or filmstrips, what should they deal with to be most useful in the assistance process?
   d. Take one or two of these ideas as illustrations. What would they look like in more detail? How would you actually use them?

IDEAS FOR PARENT TRAINING BOOKLETS

1. GATHERING ACCURATE INFORMATION. HOW PARENTS CAN DEVELOP ACCURATE MAPS OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS, DOCUMENT PROBLEMS SPECIFICALLY, AND IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

2. TAKING EFFECTIVE ACTION. ALL THE OPTIONS FOR ACTING TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOLS, INCLUDING ORGANIZING, NEGOTIATIONS, MEDIA COVERAGE, LITIGATION, LOBBYING

3 MAINTAINING A STRONG PARENT GROUP. PRACTICAL ADVICE ABOUT LEADERSHIP, DECISION MAKING, DIVIDING RESPONSIBILITIES, SELECTING AND TRAINING NEW STAFF



PUZZLE SECTION 4
Developing the Advisor's Role

Your hopes for improving the schools either succeed or fail in the day-to-day efforts of your advisors to help clients in specific school communities. In the assistance groups we studied, we found sharp contrasts in their ideal pictures of an effective advisor.

- For AFRAM, it was an active local parent, whose main job was to stimulate parent activism. A person who made a total commitment to community service and was constantly available to help parents with school and non-school problems. A leader, but a person who encouraged other leadership to develop rather than monopolizing it.

- For /I/D/E/A/, the ideal advisor was an educator with the credibility needed to convince key school system decision makers to adopt Individually Guided Education. A person who was enthusiastic about IGE. A person who could master the skills needed to lead workshops and otherwise advise school staffs in implementing IGE.

- Rural Education Program wanted a facilitator of a change process, who would not advocate specific changes in curriculum, school organization, etc. Skilled in formal and informal methods for facilitating groups. A person who could identify with client needs in rural communities, including the needs of parents from particular ethnic groups.

- United Bronx Parents looked for a fighter who would help other parents acquire the skills needed to confront school officials when problems existed in their local schools. A person who was extremely knowledgeable about what, in the view of UBP, should be going on day-to-day in a good school.

Each group tried to help advisors translate their school improvement strategy into specific techniques for assisting clients in a workshop, in informal conversations in the teachers' lounge, in a confrontation between angry parents and a school principal.

In accomplishing this translation, advisors have to constantly reconcile what the assistance group stands for, the realities of local situations, and the advisor's own style and abilities. For this balancing act to be successful, the assistance group must clearly define the advisor's role, hire people who have the potential to be good advisors, and then train and support them effectively. Rate yourself. How are you doing in developing the advisor's role?

Critical Tasks for Developing the Advisor's Role

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
defining the advisor's job	The assistance group concretely specifies the important elements of the advisor's role, and this plan is carried out in practice. (#4-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
advisor's style	The advisor can adjust the assistance group's school improvement strategy to suit a personal style, but without changing essential parts of the strategy. (#4-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
personal relationships with clients	The advisor develops personal relationships with clients, but refuses to be pressured into going against key parts of the assistance group strategy. (#4-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
hiring advisors	The assistance group carefully hires advisors who share their philosophy, who have had previous experience in the types of situations they will work in, who have personal characteristics with which clients can identify, and who can cope with the stresses of the advisor's job. (#4-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
training advisors	The assistance group trains advisors through a conscious plan that includes written materials, training sessions, direct experience in providing assistance, and analysis of that experience. (#4-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
avoiding advisor isolation	The assistance group takes steps to avoid the dangers of advisors becoming isolated (e.g., through teaming and regular supervision). (#4-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

For Discussion

- Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?
- Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a good job. What factors account for your effectiveness?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a poor job. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

Defining the Advisor's Job

In the advisor's day-to-day work, the group's school improvement strategy either succeeds or falls apart. As an advisor you have to withstand strong pressures to deviate from that strategy. You have to project clear values in which you exhibit confidence. You must hold clients accountable for carrying out "their end of the bargain" when they accuse you of being insensitive to the pressures they face. You have to maintain a continuity of purpose and a sense of priority in the face of short-term cries for help and major crises. As one effective IGE advisor told us, "People in my schools know I stand for something."

Working as an advisor inevitably means evaluating agendas of people who ask for help, and sometimes refusing to give it. It involves pushing people to do for themselves what they would rather have you do for them.

Being an advisor means always being to some extent an outsider, since you have to think constantly about how you should respond to clients -- whether you are leading a meeting or talking casually to someone who gives you a ride home.

While effective advisors work within clear limits, they are inventive and not mechanical in applying their group's ideas to a particular situation. As discussed in the previous chapter (pages 89 to 90), advisors must decide how to adjust creatively to local conditions and constraints. Rural Education Program adjusted its schedules for regular meetings of a school community group in rural upstate Washington to take into account the realities of the local economy and culture: the demands of apple picking in the fall, the difficulties of travel on mountain roads in the winter, the need to protect the apple tree buds from freezing in the spring.

Personal Relationships with Clients

Effective advisors develop personal relationships with clients. AFRAM advisors believed it was critical that "parents saw that the person from AFRAM who went to talk with the school superintendent was the same person they had for dinner the night before." But advisors can't be pressured by friendships to go against the key elements of their strategy. For example, advisors from Creative Teaching Workshop often built close relationships with school principals. However, since the advisors' credibility with teachers depended on being trusted, advisors couldn't freely share information from teachers with the principal.

Advisor's Style

Good advisors also modify their group's strategy in light of their personal style and strengths. A teacher advisor skilled in art may use art activities as a vehicle for introducing individualized instruction

methods. One parent advisor may be good at "firing people up" by talking to the whole group, while another may be more effective in one-to-one conversations. Effective assistance groups recognize that there is a range of personal styles potentially consistent with their school improvement strategy. They encourage individual advisors to build on their personal strengths within the limits of the group's strategy. They don't insist on cookie-cutter uniformity.

Effective assistance groups, to summarize, are constantly reconciling three forces that often pull advisors in opposing directions -- the assistance group's school improvement strategy, the demands of the local situation, and the advisor's personal style.

Look at Yourself — What Tensions Arise in the Advisor's Job?

Tensions constantly arise in an advisor's daily work between the group's strategy for improving schools, the pressures of the school situation, and the advisor's personal style. This exercise will help you bring to the surface some of these tensions and discuss how you might deal with them more effectively.

What Tensions Arise in the Advisor's Job?

1. List ten important things that an advisor is supposed to do or avoid doing day-to-day. Be as concrete as possible.
2. Then list some forces that work against doing these things.
3. Choose one or two that have been sources of tension for advisors in your group. What steps can you take to make it easier for advisors to act in accord with what is expected of them?

IMPORTANT THINGS ADVISORS SHOULD DO OR NOT DO	FORCES WORKING AGAINST
DON'T HELP TEACHERS WHO WON'T AGREE TO DO PART OF THE WORK THEMSELVES.	• ACCUSED OF BEING INSENSITIVE. • WANT TO GET SOMETHING GOING WITH A RESISTANT TEACHER. • WANT TO BE LIKED.
GET TEACHERS TO OBSERVE EACH OTHERS' TEACHING.	• THREATENING. INVASION OF TURF. • TEACHERS DON'T KNOW HOW TO CRITICIZE CONSTRUCTIVELY. ONE DISASTROUS INCIDENT.
INFLUENCE WAY MATH IS TAUGHT TO INTRODUCE MANIPULATIVE MATERIALS.	• IN MATH, MANIPULATIVES SEEN AS BABY STUFF OR AS GAME. • TEACHERS POOR MATHEMATICIANS. DEFENSIVE, SO STICK TO ROTE METHODS.

Training Advisors

Ineffective assistance groups turn advisors loose to work on their own, trusting that their individual skills and commitment will see them through. Effective groups use systematic methods for training advisors initially and continuing to support them.

Earlier, we described some useful methods for training all assistance group staff (see pages 64 and 65). Consistent with this advice, you should train new advisors through a planned combination of formal workshop sessions, written materials, opportunities to observe experienced advisors at work, initial supervised work with clients, and sessions to analyze this advisory work.

Avoiding Advisor Isolation

This supportive assistance should not stop after advisors have gotten their feet wet. It is especially important that advisors receive continuing supervision and support and that you avoid advisor isolation.

An advisor working alone becomes highly involved in a local situation, yet remains an outsider there -- always on the fringes. Without continuing support from the assistance group, the advisor can drift away from the appropriate role, can get too immersed in the local situation to see clearly what is happening, not think of fresh ideas for doing the job, become discouraged and depressed.

These problems are intensified when advisors are spread out across the state or nation and have limited contact with the rest of the assistance group.

There are a number of helpful ways to support advisors. Advisors can work in a local setting as a team. If they work alone, they can observe each other's work regularly. Supervisors can make regular field visits and keep in touch frequently by telephone. Advisors can meet regularly to discuss problems.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Train and Support Advisors?

How consciously do you train and support advisors? Part 1 of this exercise helps you consider what you are presently doing and what you might do in the future in light of the methods we found effective. Part 2 asks you to use a method called force field analysis to consider how you can make desirable changes in your advisor training and support methods.

How Do You Train and Support Advisors? Part 1

1. Below we list ways that effective groups have successfully trained and supported their advisors. Indicate which of these methods you are using now.

2. Suggest some ways that you might do some of these things in the future. Brainstorm future possibilities; don't think of practical limits at this point.

METHOD FOR TRAINING & SUPPORTING ADVISORS	HOW YOU'VE ALREADY DONE IT	HOW YOU MIGHT DO IT
Observing other advisors	HAVE GIVEN NEW ADVISORS ONE WEEK IN FIELD WITH EXPERIENCED HANDS (JOE, CARLA)	SET UP SCHEDULE FOR ADVISORS TO OBSERVE EACH OTHER REGULARLY.
Regular on-site supervision of advisory work	HAVEN'T HAD STAFF RESOURCES FOR THIS YET.	HAVE JOE AND CARLA CHECK IN REGULARLY WITH PEOPLE THEY TRAINED?
Teaming advisors	ONE TIME WE TRIED IT (IN OAK LAWN) DIDN'T WORK -- PERSONALITY CONFLICT?	TEAM NEW ADVISORS WITH OLD AND HAVE THOSE PAIRS OBSERVE EACH OTHER.
Setting time aside to analyze advisory work regularly	WE ALWAYS SAY WE'LL DO IT BUT WE'RE LUCKY IF WE HAVE ONE SESSION PER PROJECT.	BUILD INTO SCHEDULE -- WEDNESDAY P.M. WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN OFFICE? OR HAVE JOHN HANDLE?
Written materials to explain advisory role	STRONG POINT -- CARLA WROTE GOOD SHORT PAPER ON HER WORK.	HAVE EVERYONE READ AND REACT TO CARLA'S PAPER, THEN REVISE IT ACCORDINGLY.
Written materials to be used in assisting clients	WE HAVE SPECIFIC PIECES FROM SPECIFIC WORKSHOPS, ETC.	HAVE SOMEONE PULL TOGETHER AND ORGANIZE WHAT WE HAVE. SOME COULD BE USED AGAIN.
Other		

How Do You Train and Support Advisors? Part 2

1. Choose one of the ideas for improving the training and support for advisors that you developed in Part 1.
2. Below on the left, describe the "current situation" with respect to this idea, and on the right, the "desired change" you would like to make.
3. List positive forces that exist or could be created to move you toward the desired change. Also list the negative forces that stand in the way of making the change.
4. Make specific plans for lessening the negative forces and increasing the positive forces to help you make the improvements you want.

IDEA SETTING TIME ASIDE TO ANALYZE ADVISORY WORK REGULARLY

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS HAPPENS INFORMALLY AND ON IRREGULAR BASIS

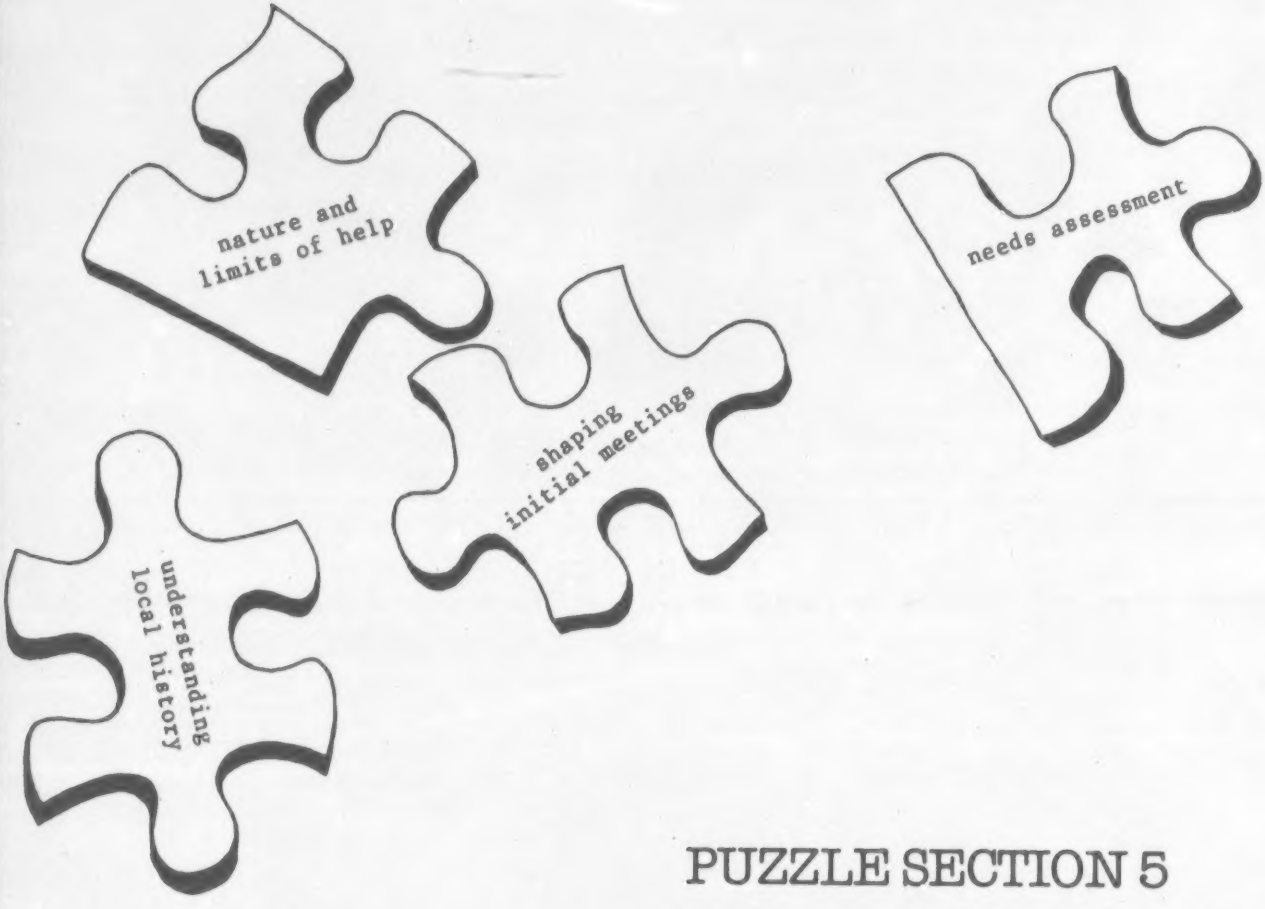
DESIRED CHANGE REGULAR TIME TO ANALYZE ADVISORY WORK

POSITIVE FORCES

- PEOPLE SAY THEY WANT MORE TIME FOR ANALYSIS SESSIONS.
- ADVISORS HAVE NOTES ON WORK THAT CAN BE USED IN SESSIONS.
- JOHN VISITS ALL ADVISORS -- COULD FACILITATE SESSIONS.
- POTENTIAL THAT EVERYONE COULD BE HERE FOR SESSION WEDNESDAY P.M.

NEGATIVE FORCES

- SOME DEFENSIVENESS. ADVISORS REALLY DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT PROBLEMS AND FAILURES.
- TIME SET ASIDE FOR ANALYSIS SESSIONS GETS EATEN UP BY ROUTINE ADMINISTRATION.
- REFUNDING IN TWO MONTHS. MAY JUST GET SESSIONS STARTED AND HAVE TO CANCEL.



PUZZLE SECTION 5

Building Relationships with Clients

An anthropologist who studied an urban school for several years noted that every week at least forty professionals from outside came into the school to provide help to either the school's staff or its students. Your advisors are thus not the only ones on the school's doorstep claiming that they can help.

Many of these outside experts leave a bad impression with teachers or with parents. Center for New Schools was once discussing possible help to both teachers and parents in a school on Chicago's South Side. They found that they had been preceded by a "human relations expert" who had brought school staff and parents together in a meeting to air their grievances, ran a stormy session in which animosities were heightened, and then disappeared.

Thus, an assistance group often has much suspicion to overcome when its advisors show up and say, "We're here to help." The way you explain yourself, make initial contacts, create first impressions is crucial to your success. You will have to clarify and reclarify what services your group has to offer -- what concretely you can do that is useful -- throughout the assistance process.

The initial steps you take in this relationship-building process are crucial, from your first contact with prospective clients until you decide whether to help them long-term. Patterns set during this early period are difficult to change. The assistance group and the advisor are quickly seen as having certain skills or lacking them, having certain agendas, having made certain commitments, being allied with particular people in the school community, and so on.

We saw a number of advisors struggling several years later to overcome mistakes they made in the first few weeks of contact with a school community -- trying to placate key teachers or parents, for instance, whom the advisors had neglected to interview at first and who became the group's enemies because they felt slighted. Building and maintaining relationships with clients is a section of the puzzle on which your long-term effectiveness clearly depends. Use the chart on the next page to assess how well you are doing.

Critical Tasks for Building Relationships with Clients

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
taking key people and groups into account	The assistance group takes into account key people and groups in the school community in the process of building relationships. (#5-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
understanding local history	The assistance group gathers information about the history of the school, school district, and community. (#5-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
shaping initial meetings	The assistance group carefully chooses the situations in which they deal with potential clients (e.g., group meeting versus personal interview). (#5-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
building credibility and trust	The assistance group builds credibility and trust with clients through such means as obtaining recommendations from people the clients respect; demonstrating that they can help the clients solve specific problems; building on the clients' personal identification with the advisor; demonstrating that their approach is comprehensive; and proving that their primary commitment is to helping the clients, rather than to achieving some hidden agenda. (#5-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
nature and limits of help	The assistance group clearly communicates its strategy, the values it is based on, the role of the advisor, and the limits on the type and amount of assistance it can offer. (#5-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
needs assessment	The assistance group employs needs assessments to identify client needs, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the schools, to involve clients in analyzing their own situations, to help clients legitimize the analysis of educational issues with decision makers, and to document client progress. (#5-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
match with client's situation	The assistance group makes realistic assessments of the match between its capabilities and the needs, readiness, and other key characteristics of the clients and their situation. (#5-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
agreements on mutual responsibilities	The assistance group develops a clear agreement with clients about the nature and limits of the assistance the group will provide and about the clients' responsibilities in the assistance process. (#5-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

For Discussion

- Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?
- Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a good job. What factors account for your effectiveness?
- Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a poor job. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

Taking Key People and Groups into Account

Earlier, we discussed the importance of "mapping" the school community as a human system (see pages 84 to 88). In relationship building, you have to draw a lot of maps early so that your knowledge of the school community's "geography" can help you avoid harmful mistakes. You have to find out as much as you can about the main groups and factions. You can't accept any one person's opinion -- people will tell you with great authority things that are simply not true. You must weigh evidence from several sources.

Failing to get this information early in the game can cause serious difficulties. You can, for example, become linked with an unpopular faction within a school faculty or parent group, and this link can isolate you from other important groups.

Understanding Local History

History is important. You don't want to stand up in front of a school faculty and be asked to analyze a burning school desegregation controversy you have never heard about. You don't want to find out a year from now that a particular school principal has a history of inviting outside groups in to help him and then failing to support them.

Shaping Initial Meetings

You also have to consider the type of situation in which you choose to deal with potential clients. Some experienced advisors will not attend a meeting unless they have already talked individually with most of the participants and understand the history of their relationships. Without this knowledge you may, for example, be caught in the crossfire between two factions and stand little chance of developing any credibility. Thinking ahead about the situations in which you will initially meet with clients and the ways you want to focus these discussions will help establish your competence.

Some effective groups do a lot of low-key detective work before they make a public appearance. Other groups have developed engaging formats for initial workshops or meetings that have consistently proven successful in arousing the interest of potential clients and allaying their fears.

On page 87, we presented a simple method for diagramming some key features of a school community. The type of information illustrated there is precisely the type of information you need to assemble early in the relationship-building process. You may want to develop a diagram similar to the one on page 87 as you go about mapping an unfamiliar school community.

Look at Yourself — What Can You Learn from Your Past Efforts to Build Relationships?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you analyze previous attempts to build initial relationships with a school community. Using these "case studies," we ask you how you might go about it differently in the future. The case study notes we ask you to prepare are used in several subsequent exercises in this chapter.

What Can You Learn from Your Past Efforts to Build Relationships?

1. Have two or three advisors prepare notes for a case study presentation about their initial efforts to build relationships with a school community. (See example below, based on one experience of Center for New Schools advisors in Chicago.) The notes should include the following information:
   a. Chronology of events in building initial relationships.
   b. Features of the school community that turned out to be especially important.
   c. Things you did that went well.
   d. Things you did that caused you trouble.
   e. Things you didn't do that you should have.
2. List three or four key lessons that you draw from these case studies. Discuss how they can be incorporated into your present work.

GRIGGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CASE STUDY NOTES

Chronology of Events

Jan. 15 Contacted principal using referral from mutual friend.

Jan. 19 Visited principal. Explained problem-solving project and what it would involve. Principal expressed interest.

Jan. 22 thru 27 Individual interviews with everyone on the staff. Interviews with PTA leaders.

Feb. 5 Problem identification workshop with full staff.

Feb. 7 Problem identification workshop with parents.

Feb. 15 Negotiated agreements with principal, teachers, parents.

Important Features of School Community

- Principal sincere but abrasive. Gives orders. Impatient.
- Open classroom teachers -- 3 of them want a transfer. Feel lack of support.
- Reading specialist -- a roadblock. Promoted to get her out of classroom. Feels threatened by us.
- Long-time teachers at school. Remember when it was all-white. Talk about good old days.
- PTA -- weak leadership, but couldn't find any other active parents.
- District superintendent -- supports our work but wants to avoid controversy.

(continued on next page)

LOOK AT YOURSELF

Things We Did That Went Well

- Individual interviews tipped us off to:

  -teacher/principal conflicts

  -isolation of open classroom group

  -previous parent training that was a flop

- Interviews allayed fears.
- Good initial tie with principal. She leveled with us about her insecurity.
- In problem identification workshop, we came off as professionals, despite some mistakes.
- Specific agreements reached were good, not because of specifics, but because they set a tone.

Things That Caused Trouble

- Naive in thinking problems we identified privately in interviews would be stated publicly by teachers in workshop.
- Tried to pack too much into workshop. It started late -- was left up in the air. Just need more time somehow.
- Parents' session superficial. Couldn't get PTA leaders to follow through.
- Principal didn't attend teacher workshop. Should have been clear that she can't back out like that.

Things We Should Have Done

- Take more time to find interested parents. Expand beyond PTA.
- Somehow schedule teacher workshop for a minimum of two hours.
- Reach understanding with principal about her role in the workshop.

Building Credibility and Trust

Advisors must prove to clients that they can be both trusted and helpful. If you fail to establish this trust and credibility, you will either be rejected or your relationship with clients will be superficial.

Advisors who are good at building relationships use a variety of methods to establish credibility and trust. Recommendations from people who are respected by clients and also are familiar with your work are especially helpful.

Some advisors emphasize common traits and interests that they share with the client. Potential clients we studied, for example, identified with advisors because the advisors were politically committed black parents, or experienced administrators who had previously headed a school, or former teachers who knew what it was like to teach in a large urban school system.

Good advisors informally communicate facts about their experience that emphasize what they have in common with clients. ("I taught at a school like this one on the West Side." "My son had the same kind of problem in fourth grade.")

Advisors can also increase their credibility by demonstrating that their approach is well thought out and comprehensive, not a seat-of-the-pants operation. One principal commented that /I/D/E/A/'s plan for individualized learning "is what I always wanted to do; these people have just put it all together so beautifully."

Another technique for building credibility is to help clients solve some specific concrete problems about which they are immediately concerned. One assistance group cemented their relationship with teachers by helping them plan a meeting with parents that the teachers were very anxious about.

Finally, it is important to establish that you have a genuine commitment to helping this particular client group -- as opposed to some hidden agenda. You may simultaneously be involved in preparing curriculum materials for general use, doing research, or building a wider political coalition. These activities will quickly raise suspicions that you are not primarily interested in helping a specific group of potential clients, but that you are out to "rip them off" in some way. Often, school staffs or parent groups have had previous negative experiences with people who said they had come to help. You have to overcome their suspicion and establish your sincerity and commitment.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Build Credibility and Trust?

This exercise helps you compare your past efforts to build credibility and trust in relationships with clients with the methods we found effective.

How Do You Build Credibility and Trust?

1. Reflect on your group's past efforts to build credibility and trust with clients. In thinking about this issue, review the case studies of your past efforts to build relationships from the exercise on page 113.

2. Consider how you have previously used each of the methods for building credibility and trust that we've found effective and how you might use them in the future. Then add your own. Fill in the chart below.

3. Choose one or two promising suggestions and make specific plans for incorporating them into your work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING CREDIBILITY AND TRUST	HOW YOU'VE DONE IT IN THE PAST	HOW YOU MIGHT DO IT IN THE FUTURE
Recommendations from people the client trusts	CARLA GOT TWO OTHER PRINCIPALS TO CONTACT DR. MCGOVERN AT WEST TOWN SCHOOL.	TRY THIS APPROACH SYSTEMATICALLY WITH EACH NEW SCHOOL.
Personal identification between client and advisor	ADVISORS STRESS EXPERIENCE AS TEACHERS.	ALSO BRING IN ADVISORS' EXPERIENCES AS PARENTS.
Demonstrating that your approach is comprehensive	OUR INITIAL WORKSHOPS ARE WELL DEVELOPED AND WELL RECEIVED — GIVE GOOD IMPRESSION.	IMPROVE OUR WRITTEN MATERIALS TO SUPPORT WORKSHOP PRESENTATION.
Helping the client solve specific concrete problems		
Proving that your primary commitment is to helping the client, not to achieving some hidden agenda		
Other_____		

LOOK AT YOURSELF

Nature and Limits of Help

Effective assistance groups consistently clarify the nature of the group's strategy, the values on which it is based, the role of the advisor, and the limits on the nature and the amount of assistance available.

Ineffective assistance groups are vague about these matters, over-commit themselves, and create unrealistic expectations about what they can deliver. They do so either because their underlying strategy is unclear or because they are reluctant to confront clients and set limits. Further, ineffective groups who do not clarify where they stand at the beginning find themselves "manipulating" clients in light of unstated values. Better to get your own biases and limits out on the table early, so that clients can make a conscious decision about whether or not they want to work with your group.

An effective process for clarifying such issues can be seen, for example, in /I/D/E/A/'s introductory workshops, in which a school staff is helped to define its own goals and match them with /I/D/E/A/'s proposed change process. In this workshop, advisors also clarify what kind of help they can provide and how much time can be made available to that particular school.

Agreements on Mutual Responsibilities

While the assistance group is explaining what it can do, it is important that the client's responsibilities be clarified. No effective assistance strategy can be carried out if the entire burden for success rests with the advisor. For example, Rural Education Program would help local communities carry out needs assessments of local school problems only if community members agreed to do most of the data collection and analysis.

In an effective relationship building process, then, you and the clients build a set of mutual commitments and expectations. Some assistance groups clarify these expectations through written agreements and review them periodically with clients; some rely on less formal methods but succeed in clarifying expectations through repeated discussions. Ideally, this clarification process generates a feeling among clients that they chose to work with you and made some sacrifices and commitments to do so -- not that you have feverishly courted them.

Look at Yourself — How Do You Build Mutual Commitments with Clients?

How do you build clear mutual commitments with clients? What problems arise if you don't? This exercise will help you draw some lessons about building clear understandings with clients from your past work.

How Do You Build Mutual Commitments with Clients?

1. Review the case studies of your past efforts to build relationships from the exercise on page 113.

2. Ask the people who prepared them to respond to the following questions:
   a. In what ways were you successful and in what ways unsuccessful in clarifying the nature and limits of the assistance that you were capable of providing?
   b. In what ways were you successful and in what ways unsuccessful in obtaining commitments from clients about their responsibilities in the assistance process?
   c. How did strengths or weaknesses in building these mutual commitments affect your subsequent work?
   d. In light of this experience, what ideas do you have about how to create shared understanding of mutual commitments between you and your clients?

3. Pick one or two lessons from your analysis and make specific plans for incorporating them into your present work.

HARRISON HIGH EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN CLARIFYING OUR ASSISTANCE CAPABILITIES

- UNCLEAR OVERALL, ESPECIALLY TO THE TEACHERS WHO JOINED THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM IN THE FALL.
- MADE PROMISES TO PROVIDE SOME HELP OUR ADVISORS WEREN'T REALLY TRAINED TO PROVIDE, E.G., SCHEDULING.

EXPECTATIONS OF THEM

AGAIN VERY WEAK. WE MADE DEMANDS AND BACKED DOWN:

- THEY REASSIGNED THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM DIRECTOR.
- THEY GAVE HIS REPLACEMENT OTHER DUTIES, INCLUDING HALL DUTIES.
- DIDN'T DO THE COMMUNITY SURVEY AS PROMISED, SO WE DID IT OURSELVES!!

HOW DID IT AFFECT SUBSEQUENT WORK?

- WE WERE EXPECTED TO DO EVERYTHING AND THEIR OBLIGATIONS WERE UNCLEAR. WE WERE SCAPEGOATS WHEN THE PROGRAM RAN INTO PROBLEMS.
- WEAK DIRECTOR AFTER THEY REPLACED THE ONE THEY PROMISED

Match with Client's Situation

Some inexperienced assistance groups begin with unrealistic ideas about the kinds of situations in which they can be effective. We have observed that over time they become much more realistic about the limitations of their approach, the situations in which they can make a difference, and the preconditions they need for success.

Creative Teaching Workshop decided it could only be effective in schools where the principal was a strong supporter of their approach. Rural Education Program grew to believe it could be most effective when a specific educational issue had become a matter of major public concern, so that people had a pressing motivation to learn REP's problem-solving process.

It is critical to spend time during the relationship-building process assessing the match between your own capabilities and the nature of the school community you are tentatively planning to help. Experienced advisors have discovered that general expressions of interest from prospective clients are inadequate data for judging this match. Probe for specific commitments. Will the parents commit themselves to meet every week and show up consistently during a trial period? Will the principal commit money from his discretionary fund to buy materials for the project? Be realistic and look for hard evidence.

Look at Yourself — What Conditions Do You Need to Be Effective?

What minimum conditions do you need to be effective in helping a parent group, principal, or teaching staff? This exercise will help you clarify what you need.

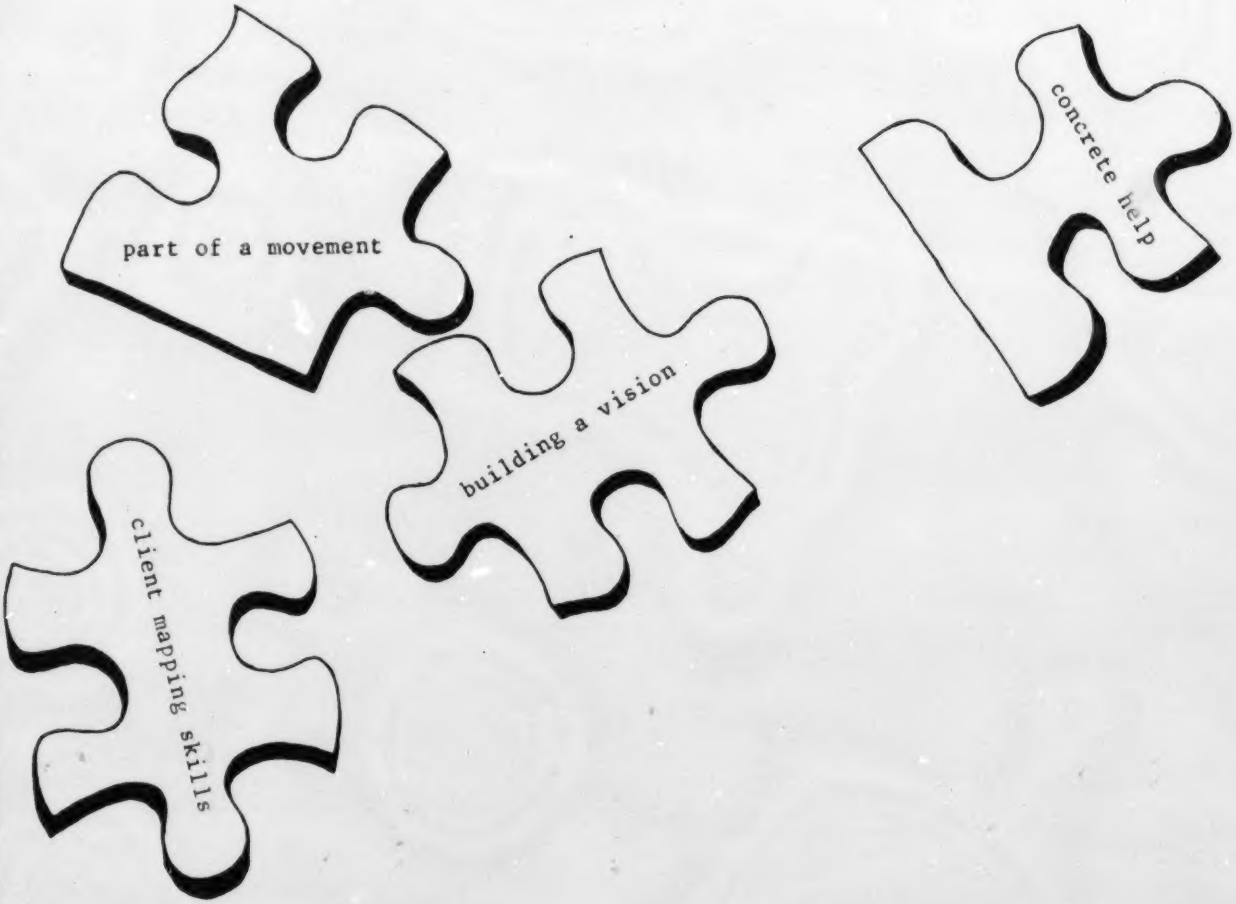
What Conditions Do You Need to Be Effective?

1. Once again, review the case study information you generated for the exercise on page 113.

2. Below, list (a) some conditions that are <u>essential</u> to your ability to be effective in helping a school community and (b) some conditions that are desirable but not essential. Be concrete. Specify what you expect people to <u>do</u>, whenever appropriate.

3. Indicate how you would judge whether each of these conditions was present in a school community you were investigating to decide whether to work there long-term.

CONDITION FOR SUCCESS (ESSENTIAL OR DESIRABLE)	HOW YOU WOULD CHECK IT OUT?
NEED TO FIND TWO OR THREE KEY PARENTS WITH POTENTIAL FOR LEADERSHIP. (ESSENTIAL.)	• INTERVIEWS WITH MANY PARENTS -- AT HOME, OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL. • TEST THEM BY GIVING THEM A SPECIFIC TASK TO CARRY OUT.
OPEN TO RECEIVING HELP. IF DOMINATED BY TIGHT LEADERSHIP GROUP NOT OPEN TO LEARNING, IT WON'T WORK. (ESSENTIAL.)	• JUDGE FROM CONVERSATIONS. DO THEY CONSIDER OUR SUGGESTIONS SERIOUSLY? • NEGATIVE INDICATOR IS LEADERS WHO TRY TO KEEP US FROM MEETING THE REST OF THEIR GROUP
COMMITMENT TO TRAINING WORKSHOPS -- TWO HOURS A WEEK FOR FIVE WEEKS. (ESSENTIAL.)	• EXPLAIN IN DETAIL. PART OF OUR WRITTEN AGREEMENT.



PUZZLE SECTION 6
Providing Assistance

Advisors who later formed the Center for New Schools acted as catalysts in establishing Metro High School as part of the Chicago public schools. Metro High is an experimental school that combines conventional high school courses with learning experiences developed with Chicago's businesses, cultural institutions, and community organizations. Metro students (a cross section of Chicago's young people) have been taught marine biology at the Shedd Aquarium and improvisational acting at The Second City theater.

The advisors developed the original plan for the school and organized a coalition of business people to support the idea. They convinced the superintendent of schools to set up the school. They helped select the original principal and teachers, who developed a strong sense of ownership of the program. The advisors assisted the staff during the first two years of operation; they taught classes intended as models for the use of community resources, advised teachers about their own teaching, participated in staff planning sessions, and held formal workshops for school staff and for the staffs of cooperating organizations.

Metro has been one of the few stable integrated high schools in Chicago. At one point 10,000 students were on its waiting list for admission. Independent assessments document that it has offered a distinctive educational program consistent with the advisors' initial plan. In a study of the school's first two years, reading achievement of the Metro student body was significantly greater than the achievement of a comparable group of students attending conventional high schools. The school has faced many problems, but the achievement of the original group of advisors is significant.

Similarly, AFRAM's assistance to parents in Flint, Michigan, produced several significant changes. AFRAM assisted active parents in two Flint elementary schools, who were involved in the federal Follow-Through program, to focus their energies to achieve a series of tangible reforms. Through parent workshops and strategy meetings, AFRAM advisors helped the parents build confidence and develop specific plans. Over three years, the national staff trained a parent from Flint to take on the key advisory role, and he was effective in continuing the development of local parent leadership that got things done.

Among the parents' tangible accomplishments: Parents actively screened and selected teachers for the Follow-Through program and decided how funds would be allocated. Parents customarily came to the school without a special reason for being there, and eventually their presence ceased to arouse

fears among teachers. One school changed its image completely: what had been considered one of the city's worst became a school that parents wanted their children to attend. And parents established their own non-profit organization that has won federal grants to operate social service programs in Flint.

Increasingly, teachers participated in AFRAM's formal training sessions. One teacher remarked that "more teachers and students here know Preston Wilcox [the AFRAM advisor] than know the superintendent of schools."

In these two instances, all the sections and pieces of the assistance puzzle fit together, and the help from advisors resulted in tangible and basic reforms consistent with each group's school improvement strategy. Providing this kind of effective assistance is, of course, the payoff -- the reason you struggle with the problems of hustling for money, training advisors, arguing about strategy, building relationships with clients, and all the rest.

Rate yourself on the tasks we found critical in providing assistance well.

Critical Tasks for Providing Assistance

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
blending five assistance methods	The assistance group blends five methods in providing help: structured workshops, over-the-shoulder advice, teaching by example, providing written or audio-visual materials, and networking. (#6-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
doing things for clients	Advisors almost never do things "for" clients and without the clients' involvement. (#6-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
blending process skills with substance	Advisors use and teach group process methods in helping clients, but blend them into an effort to communicate substantive information and skills. (#6-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
concrete help	The assistance group gives concrete help on immediate problems facing clients. (#6-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
critical mass among clients	The assistance group develops a critical mass of support and involvement among clients, so that its efforts lead to reforms in human systems, not merely changes in isolated individuals. (#6-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
broad network of support	Advisors help clients build a broad network of support among those who have a stake in how a local school functions. (#6-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

RATE YOURSELF

RATE YOURSELF

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
encouraging independent action	Advisors consistently press clients to take independent action. (#6-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
emphasizing skill development	Advisors strongly emphasize skill development in work with clients. (#6-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
broadening client group leadership	Advisors strive to broaden the leadership base in client groups. (#6-9)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
client mapping skills	Advisors build client skills for "mapping" their own school communities. (#6-10)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
cycle of analysis and action	Advisors help clients develop a regular cycle of analysis and action. (#6-11)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
clients become trainers	Advisors help clients become trainers for others. (#6-12)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
making clients conscious of progress	Advisors make clients conscious that they are acquiring new skills and making progress toward desired goals. (#6-13)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
building a vision	Advisors help clients develop a vision about how the schools can be improved, which clients come to understand and identify with emotionally. (#6-14)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
internalizing a standard	Advisors help clients internalize a standard for carrying out the assistance group's approach to school improvement effectively. (#6-15)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
part of a movement	Advisors encourage clients to see themselves as part of a larger educational or social movement. (#6-16)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
emotional breakthrough	Advisors develop methods and capitalize on opportunities to "break through" with clients on an emotional level. (#6-17)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
collaboration among client groups	Advisors help various client groups develop a network among themselves through which they can collaborate and support each other. (#6-18)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
long-term advisory help	Advisors develop mechanisms for insuring long-term advisory help for clients. (#6-19)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

RATE YOURSELF

For Discussion

- **Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?**
- **Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>good job</u>. What factors account for your effectiveness?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a <u>poor job</u>. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?**

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

BLENDING FIVE ASSISTANCE METHODS

Effective assistance groups blend five methods for working with clients. Each has its characteristic strengths and weaknesses.

First, advisors sometimes lead structured workshops. For example, when teachers expressed an interest in learning to make games to aid math instruction, Center for New Schools advisors led a workshop to show them how. Structured workshops are efficient ways to teach, and well-planned workshops can be very involving. One disadvantage they have is that they are hard to squeeze into the teachers' day.

Second, advisors provide over-the-shoulder assistance. Creative Teaching Workshop advisors often observed teachers in the classroom, for example, and then offered observations about how teachers worked with students. United Bronx Parents took part in a planning session with a group of parents to prepare for a meeting with their district superintendent of schools and offered advice about what parents should ask him.

This direct approach to assistance makes the advisor's suggestions immediately relevant to client problems and can increase the advisor's credibility. However, over-the-shoulder advice is time consuming. And clients will not automatically generalize it beyond the immediate situation.

Third, advisors can model desirable skills by using these skills themselves. One advisor, for instance, role-played effective counseling techniques as part of a workshop. Another showed parents how to keep educators from dominating a meeting by asking a school principal a series of challenging questions. Modeling vividly illustrates skills for clients. One disadvantage is that modeling often places the advisor in a very active role and may result in clients taking a back seat.

Fourth, advisors can provide written or audio-visual materials in the course of assisting clients. As we discussed earlier (see page 93), concise handouts, handbooks, and the like can be given to clients in response to an immediate need for information. United Bronx Parents gave parents a one-page explanation of student rights in school suspensions when they helped families in suspension hearings.

Written and audio-visual materials can present information vividly and efficiently; they can also be boring and overwhelming if used inappropriately.

Fifth, advisors can help their clients learn from each other by bringing them together to share information and provide each other with emotional support. This process is often called networking. AFRAM brought families together from all over the country at an

annual Family Conference designed to achieve this sharing.

Of course, networking is expensive in time and money; it is often hard to get parents or teachers to participate in such sharing experiences outside their own school or community when they see so many immediate problems "at home" that need attention. /I/D/E/A/ tried to create a mutually supportive network of schools committed to IGE in a metropolitan area, but often had difficulty getting busy teachers and principals to commit the needed time.

A blend of assistance methods is vital because, as we've tried to illustrate, each method has strengths and weaknesses, and these strengths and weaknesses often complement each other. If you are using just one or two of these five methods, you are seriously limiting your potential.

A sixth method is frequently used by ineffective advisors, but it has few strengths and many weaknesses: doing things for your clients. For example, a teacher advisor who was anxious to encourage teachers to teach science more creatively came into classrooms and helped students stock aquariums. But teachers had no role in developing this lesson, so the aquariums generally sat unused after the advisor left. The water turned green, and the fish died. We found that doing things for clients without their involvement creates either indifference or dependency. We recommend that you avoid it whenever you can.

Look at Yourself — What Assistance Methods Do You Use?

How do you use the five productive assistance methods we've just described? Could you use some of them more and strengthen your assistance efforts? Do you often do things "for" clients? Part 1 of the exercise allows you to take stock of your present methods. Part 2 will help you consider new possibilities.

What Assistance Methods Do You Use? Part 1

1. **Think about your own assistance work. For each of the six assistance methods listed below, describe some ways that you use them in your work. Note specific examples.**

2. **For each method, note whether you use it frequently, occasionally, or seldom. Why is this so?**

a. Structured workshops THE FEW TIMES WE'VE TRIED THIS SEEMED TO TURN PARENTS OFF — TOO FORMAL?

b. Over-the-shoulder assistance OUR MAIN METHOD — BUT SOMETIMES LEADS INTO TOO MUCH OF DOING THINGS FOR CLIENTS

c. Modeling AGAIN, HARD TO DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN THIS AND ACTUALLY DOING THINGS FOR CLIENTS BECAUSE IT'S QUICKER. JEAN IS BEST AT DIFFERENTIATING.

d. Providing materials WE HAVE GOOD MATERIALS ON RUNNING A PARENTS' MEETING AND ON SOME STUDENTS' RIGHTS ISSUES (SEX DISCRIMINATION, SUSPENSION) - BEGINNING TO FIND WE NEED MORE.

e. Networking JUST BEGINNING TO TRY THIS, WITH CITY WIDE ONE-DAY PARENT MEETINGS FROM ALL SCHOOLS WE'VE WORKED WITH, PLANNED FOR APRIL (?) IF WE GET FUNDING.

f. Doing things "for" clients DIFFICULT TO AVOID THIS ESPECIALLY IN EARLY STAGE WHEN PARENTS ARE RELUCTANT TO DEAL WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS THEMSELVES.

What Assistance Methods Do You Use? Part 2

1. **Stretch your mind. Brainstorm a list of new ways you might use the first five methods we listed in Part 1.**

2. **Also brainstorm a list of ways to minimize doing things for clients without their involvement.**

3. **Choose one or two of the most promising ideas. Develop specific plans for actually incorporating them into your work.**

New Ways to Use...

a. Structured workshops RETHINK WORKSHOPS TO AVOID INTIMIDATING PARENTS AND CONCENTRATE ON SKILLS THAT THEY LACK WHICH MAKE THEM TOO DEPENDENT ON US.

b. Over-the-shoulder assistance CONTINUE THIS, BUT MAKE CLEARER AT START THAT THEY MUST TAKE INITIATIVE AND WE'LL SUPPORT.

c. Modeling ASK JEAN TO DO WORKSHOP ON THIS FOR STAFF?

d. Providing materials DEVELOP SHORT MATERIALS ON: (1) SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES (MAYBE 3 OR 4 OF THESE- QUESTIONING DIAGNOSIS, HOW TO EVALUATE IEP, ETC.) (2) HISTORY, ROLE AND MAIN CONCERNS OF TEACHERS UNION.

e. Networking FOLLOW THROUGH ON CONFERENCE - CITYWIDE COMMITTEE? NEWSLETTER?

Ways to Minimize...

f. Doing things "for" clients MAYBE DO A ROLE-PLAYING WORKSHOP TO BUILD PARENT SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE VIS-A-VIS EDUCATORS? - SHOULD BE EARLY IN EACH RELATIONSHIP.

LOOK AT YOURSELF

DEVELOPING A CRITICAL MASS OF SUPPORT

We have already discussed the importance of aiming for changes in the human systems within the school community: changes in the usual way that teachers do their jobs, changes in the way parents are treated when they come into the school, systematic changes in the way children are tracked or disciplined by school staff.

To accomplish these human system changes, advisors relate quite differently to their primary clients and to other key members of the school community who are important to bringing about changes and making them last.

Primary Clients

An effective assistance organization identifies one or two groups of clients within the school community that they commit themselves to help. These are the people that the advisors see as most critical to the process of improving schools.

For example, United Bronx Parents advisors repeatedly emphasized that they were "parents helping parents," and that they didn't want to slip into an ambiguous role as a mediator between parents and educators. Creative Teaching Workshop initially saw their primary client group as teachers, and later as a combination of teachers and school administrators.

Ineffective advisors often think they have succeeded when they see reforms made by a few isolated individuals. Effective advisors constantly keep in mind that they are trying to build a broad enough base of support within primary client groups so that the characteristics of the human system change, and that these changes endure. One advisor from Creative Teaching Workshop expressed the idea this way:

> "In a typical school you will find the teachers divided into a number of categories. About 5% of them will be very enthusiastic about experiential learning, about 10% violently opposed, and the large mass of teachers will be initially indifferent. The trick in being a successful advisor is to move beyond the small core of committed teachers and involve those who are indifferent to your ideas and, quite often, are indifferent to teaching as a profession."

Effective advisors work to build a critical mass of support in their primary client group by consistently reaching out to more people and by avoiding actions that will tie them to a select few. If someone in the client group has picked up special knowledge in one area (say understanding the school district budget), an effective advisor will press the "expert" to share that knowledge and skill with other group members.

Other Key People Who Have a Stake in the School

While you build support in your primary client groups, it is essential that you also take into account all the other groups and individuals who have a stake in how the local school functions. Failure to do so carries high costs.

In one project, Center for New Schools advisors suffered because of tunnel vision. They spent a great deal of time working with the teachers in a local high school to develop a model program that they hoped would be incorporated into a new school that was being constructed. However, the CNS strategy ignored the people in the downtown office who were planning the new school. All the time CNS's model program was experimenting with new ideas, the downtown planning group was going ahead as if this model program did not exist. The advisors never clarified how the model program was going to influence this planning process. In fact it was completely ignored.

Effective advisors don't make this error. They analyze the many groups and individuals that affect the school community -- parents, children, teachers, local business people, central office school administrators, local politicians, state education officials, federal agencies. And they help their clients build a network of support for desired changes among these diverse groups. If they are teacher advisors, they help clients gain support for their school improvement efforts from key school district administrators. And they don't rely on a formal organization chart to determine whose permission is crucial; they help clients become familiar with the informal politics of the school district. Nor do they assume that the people who need to be won over are going to become enthusiastic boosters of their work; they are satisfied to appeal to people's self-interest.

One teacher advisory group provided assistance to teachers that was universally praised in local schools. But when their foundation grant ran out, the school superintendent ignored the advisors' request that their funding be picked up by the district. The advisors simply hadn't devoted any attention to building a network of support in the school district's central office that would insure their program's survival.

The care needed to build a network of support is illustrated by the steps that one principal took to set up an individualized instruction program in a conservative and suspicious community. During the program's first year, he taught an intermediate class and his program coordinator taught a primary class, using the individualized approach. To do this he concentrated on his teaching during the day and did his administrative work at

night. In addition to teaching, he launched an extensive effort to inform his teachers and the community about the new approach. He held monthly inservice meetings with his teachers and encouraged them to observe the demonstration classes. He brought school board members to the classes to show them that the children were learning and that "there was no chaos." He spoke extensively to parent and community groups, showing slides of his demonstration classroom.

Even advisors who do excellent work with their primary client group but fail to build a broader network of support usually don't succeed in the long run.

Look at Yourself — Are You Building a Broad Base of Support?

We have already included several exercises designed to help you analyze the school community as a human system and to think about how you can build a resource network to support your work. These appear on pages 31, 87, and 69. We recommend that you review these exercises to see how effective you are in building a critical mass of support, both among your primary clients and among the broader constellation of people who have a stake in the school.

ENCOURAGING INITIATIVE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

A constant concern of experienced assistance groups is the desire to provide assistance in such a way that they encourage independent initiative and discourage dependency.

Encouraging Independent Action

From the beginning, as we mentioned earlier (pages 117 and 118), you have to build clear client responsibilities into your agreement to provide help. You have to emphasize that your capacity is limited -- that clients must do most things for themselves. This sometimes involves confrontations with clients, in which you refuse to do things that you believe clients can do for themselves. A parent advisor for AFRAM described how this tension grew up in one midwestern city:

> "At first, Mrs. Latham, the new head of the parents' group, would come to me and say, 'I have a problem, and I can't deal with it. You're supposed to tell me what to do. What kind of a consultant are you?' And I would usually say, 'You have to decide yourself what to do.' She used to hate me, and say I was lazy and wouldn't help her out. Now she sees it was part of her development as a leader to make her own decisions."

Emphasizing Skill Development

Encouraging independence means building client skills. Advisors teach principals how to run a meeting to get teachers involved. They help teachers master the skills needed to diagnose a child's reading problems or to keep several groups of children working on different projects at the same time. They teach parents how to observe in the classroom, interview the principal and get down to the facts, carry out a house-to-house parent survey.

Effective advisors have quite consciously analyzed the skills that their clients need to improve the schools. Effective advisors are always talking about how these skills can be taught, formally or informally. Ineffective advisors don't focus on this skill-building question. They drift into doing things for their clients, leaving them with no new skills.

Some skills you want to teach will be specific to your own school improvement strategy. But we have found others that seem important for any client group seeking to bring about changes in its local schools.

Client Mapping Skills

Clients need to learn skills for mapping the local school community and the agencies that affect it, just as advisors do. For example, AFRAM trained parents to understand the set-up of their local school system and the place of the Follow-Through program within its administrative structure.

Cycle of Analysis and Action

Clients also need to learn to carry out the cycle of analysis and action that is such an important element in an assistance group's own effectiveness. For example, /I/D/E/A/ helped teachers master a process for diagnosing a student's learning level and style, designing an appropriate learning experience, carrying it out, and then assessing the results.

Clients Become Trainers

Another important skill for clients to master is to introduce others to the assistance group's ideas -- to train others in turn to become open classroom teachers, parent activists, or meeting facilitators. In Flint, Michigan, for instance, several of the parents became as adept at parent training as AFRAM's original national consultants.

Training one's peers not only increases the number of involved clients; it also makes an experienced parent or teacher more sharply aware of the change process developed by the assistance group, and further increases the trainer's commitment.

Look at Yourself — How Much Do You Encourage Skill Development and Independent Initiative?

How consciously do you focus on increasing your clients' skills and independence? This exercise asks you to reflect on what skills you are trying to teach and the pressures involved in that effort.

How Much Do You Encourage Skill Development and Independent Initiative?

1. Brainstorm a list of the skills that you are trying to help your clients acquire. Then review the list and indicate three or four of them that you feel are most important.

2. Think about the ways, by formal and informal means, that you try to help clients acquire these skills. Are there ways that you could put more emphasis on them?

3. Identify some touchy situations in your past assistance work in which your desire to teach skills or encourage independence has run into resistance from your clients.
   a. How did you handle these conflicts at the time?
   b. How would you handle them differently if you faced them again?

LOOK AT YOURSELF

SKILLS YOU WANT TO TEACH	HOW YOU TEACH THEM
1. PRINCIPAL CAN DELEGATE ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS TO OTHERS.	1. - PRINCIPAL MAINTAINS LOG OF HOW HE/SHE SPENDS TIME. ASSESSES LOG INDIVIDUALLY AND PREPARES "DELEGATION PLAN." - PRINCIPAL DISCUSSION GROUP HEARS REPORTS ON LOG ANALYSIS. GROUP EXPERTISE AND PEER PRESSURE AT WORK. - INDIVIDUAL ADVISORS MEET WITH PRINCIPALS AT SCHOOLS. REVIEW THEIR "DELEGATION PLAN" WITH THEM AND COMMENT ON HOW IT IS BEING CARRIED OUT.
2. PRINCIPAL CAN PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM TO TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY IN READING.	2. - PRINCIPAL DEVELOPS PERSONAL PLAN FOR ASSURING CONTINUITY IN READING INSTRUCTION FROM CLASSROOM TO CLASSROOM. - PRINCIPAL OBSERVES VIDEOTAPE WE PREPARED OF TEACHER STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS.

BUILDING A STRONG COMMITMENT TO A VISION

Good assistance is not just teaching new skills and knowledge. The most significant changes we observed took place when advisors also helped clients embrace a different vision of what schools could be and how they could make that vision a reality.

Advisors from Creative Teaching Workshop brought about the greatest change in a school if the principal and a core group of teachers developed a strong commitment to CTW's basic ideas about how children learn.

AFRAM used potent moral arguments about the importance of parents protecting their children to break down the notion that only professionals know what's best and to get parents to see their own responsibilities toward schools in a new way:

> "Parents are the first teachers. Parents have a vested interest in the entire future of their children and not just until the current semester ends. Most educators use the children as a weapon to control parental actions. Fducators do not really view themselves as a guardian of children, but rather as guardians of the schools."

Emotional Breakthrough

Many advisors described for us some crucial points at which they broke through with clients on an emotional level and deepened clients' commitment to the assistance group's vision of what education could be. /I/D/E/A/ trained its prospective local advisors through a two-week experience that included direct work with children. "At the end of the two weeks," an /I/D/E/A/ staff member told us, "everyone is usually in tears. Most people say it is one of the most significant experiences of their lives."

Creative Teaching Workshop believed that one key way to break through with educators was to encourage them to let down their defenses and experiment with balance beams, paint, and clay. One advisor describes the changes in a group of New York City school principals when the principals stopped discussing administrative problems around a table and, reluctantly, moved to the art workshop in the teachers' center:

> "It was critical when we got them out of their coats and ties. When we got them to the potters' wheel. When their dirty hands were touching mine on the wheel, I felt I had really made contact with them for the first time."

Internalizing a Standard

The emotional connection that clients make with an assistance group's ideas is revealed when clients internalize a standard for what it means to carry out the group's approach effectively. In schools where Individually

Guided Education was being seriously carried out, for example, we frequently heard teachers ask, "Am I a good IGE teacher?" Among parents who were helped by AFRAM, we heard parents wonder "What would Preston do in this situation?"

Part of a Movement

Strengthening the emotional bond between clients and an effective assistance group is the feeling that clients are part of a larger social movement -- that they are not alone. /I/D/E/A/ built this group feeling in several ways: they encouraged sharing among local leagues of IGE schools, and held regional and national conferences for educators committed to IGE. AFRAM created this spirit by encouraging national political action on the part of parents and by holding its annual Family Conference. About the Family Conference, AFRAM's Preston Wilcox remarked:

> "At first we filled up the conferences with a lot of workshops, but we found that the most important parts came when people just got together and talked informally and reaffirmed the love that they had for each other."

Look at Yourself — How Do People Develop a Commitment to Your Vision of Better Schools?

How can you develop a strong commitment among your clients to your vision of how the schools can be improved? This exercise helps you look at your past experience to suggest some ideas.

How Do People Develop a Commitment to Your Vision of Better Schools?

1. Ask individual advisors to list and briefly describe some specific events through which clients were drawn closer to your group's ideas about improving the schools.

2. Of course, one cannot simply manufacture such situations through deliberate planning. But are there some lessons or implications for your work that you can draw from these past experiences?

WEEKEND RETREAT AT BURLINGTON CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROGRAM STAFF

WHAT HAPPENED?

- TEACHERS SENSED THE NEED TO GET AWAY AND RETHINK THINGS AFTER TWO MONTHS OF OPERATING THE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM.
- TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT BEFOREHAND SURFACED MAJOR CONCERNS, WHICH WERE: MAKING DECISIONS PRODUCTIVELY IN MEETINGS, GIVEN THE NEED TO BALANCE "PARTICIPATION" WITH THE NEED TO GET THINGS DONE; CONFLICTS IN RELATIONS WITH THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL THAT THREATEN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM'S EXISTENCE.

FRIDAY NIGHT OF RETREAT

- SESSION ON GETTING TO KNOW OTHER STAFF AS PEOPLE -- WENT WELL.
- AGREEMENT ON AGENDA FOR REST OF WEEKEND AND SPECIFICALLY WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH.

SATURDAY

- MINI-LECTURE ON EFFECTIVE MEETINGS
- VIDEOTAPE OF PORTIONS OF LAST TEACHERS' MEETING.
- DISCUSSION OF CONTRAST BETWEEN CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MEETING AND OUR MEETING.

LOOK AT YOURSELF

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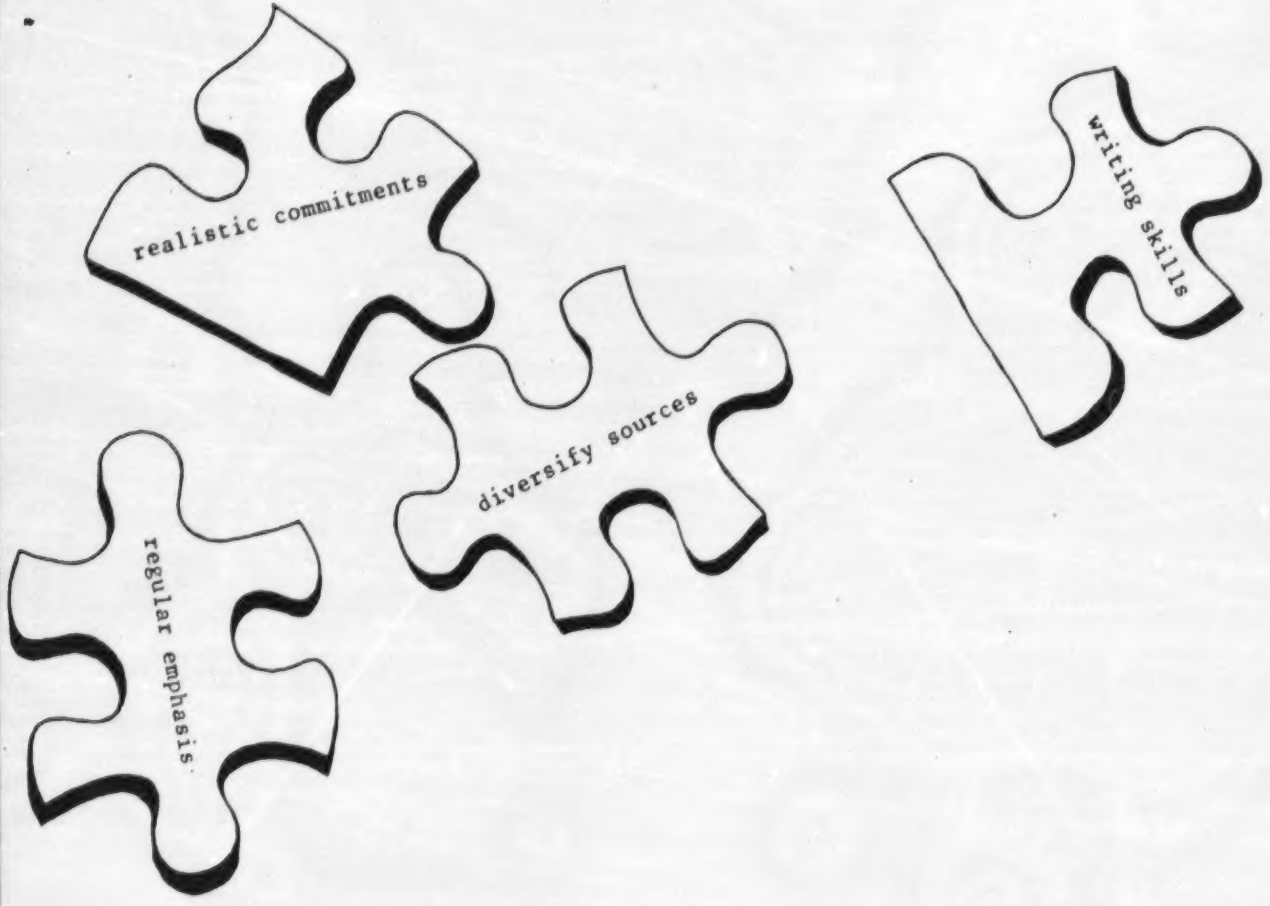


PUZZLE SECTION 7
Raising Funds

We asked the founder of one assistance group how fund raising had affected the development of her organization:

"Well, I've thought about this a lot and I would say in at least three big ways.

"First, it drains away the time of the leadership. I had hoped to work directly in the schools and to supervise our teacher advisors closely, but I found that the process of raising funds kept pulling me away. We concluded early that almost all our money came to us from people in foundations and the government that we cultivated personally; we've never gotten a penny by just submitting a proposal blind. So this means finding out who knows who, going to meet people, sizing them up. Then there is the time for writing proposals, usually on short notice. My staff is always angry because I keep disappearing to raise money.

"Second, there are the ups and downs in staffing. We started with four people on our first grant from the state. Then we got a big federal contract and all of a sudden we had to hire ten new staff members by yesterday and set up two branch offices. Now, with the contract almost over, people are anxious about their jobs. The question for many has become, 'How can we maintain a staff of thirteen,' and I'm afraid we're losing sight of our original purpose. We may drop back to three now. It's either feast or famine.

"Third, fashions change among funders. None of them wants to face the need for our groups to work with the same schools for five years. We have to come up with a new wrinkle to appeal to funders. We either have to change our focus -- from working with teachers, for instance, to working with principals -- or we have to promise to reach twice as many teachers in half the time."

These are typical frustrations in raising funds for an assistance group. It takes <u>five to seven years</u> to develop and test a comprehensive school improvement strategy. Sustained funding for this long is very difficult to obtain.

But some groups are substantially more successful in fund raising than others. Rate yourself on the critical tasks that go into effective fund raising.

Critical Tasks for Raising Funds

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
regular emphasis	The assistance group devotes regular energy to analyzing possibilities for funding and to cultivating relationships with funders. (#7-1)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
diversify sources	The assistance group works persistently to diversify its funding sources. (#7-2)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
writing skills	The assistance group develops technical skills in writing proposals and reports for funders. (#7-3)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
adjusting to funder priorities	The assistance group convinces funders that their assistance work merits support in light of the funders' goals and priorities, while maintaining the basic thrust of the assistance group's program. (#7-4)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
realistic commitments	The assistance group prepares realistic plans and timetables in applying for funds. They seek funds proportional to the projects they agree to undertake, or renegotiate commitments to bring them in line with available funds. (#7-5)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
pressing for long-term funding	The assistance group presses for long-term rather than short-term funding. (#7-6)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
using natural bench marks	The assistance group plans the ends of funding cycles to coincide with natural bench marks in the group's work. (#7-7)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

RATE YOURSELF

		not at all what you do					exactly what you do
funders' shifting expectations	The assistance group develops methods for dealing with funders' changing expectations that minimize demands on time and energy for the assistance group staff. (#7-8)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
documenting assistance work	The assistance group documents its work to establish what services they have provided and what effects their work has had. (#7-9)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
initial funds for about three years	The assistance group obtains sufficient funds for about three years to allow an initial period of strategy development through direct work with clients. (#7-10)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
funds for an additional three years	The assistance group obtains funding for an additional period of about three years to further refine its strategy through assistance to clients. (#7-11)	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

RATE YOURSELF

For Discussion

- **Why did individuals rate the group as they did on specific tasks?**
- **Do you agree that these particular tasks are critical to your effectiveness, or do you think that our observations are misguided or inappropriate for you?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a good job. What factors account for your effectiveness?**
- **Identify critical tasks that are both important to you and on which you are doing a poor job. What factors account for your problems and how could you perform these tasks more effectively?**

MORE ABOUT SELECTED CRITICAL TASKS

Mounting a Sustained Fund-Raising Effort

Like management, fund raising is a section of the puzzle that is frequently neglected until a crisis puts the group's future in doubt.

Groups who are ineffective in fund raising do it haphazardly. Effective groups devote regular energy and staff time to exploring possibilities for funding. They review potential funding sources systematically, using information from such fund-raising manuals as Program Planning and Proposal Writing by Norton J. Kiritz. (This manual and other fund-raising resources are available from The Grantsmanship Center, 1031 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, Ca. 90015.) They master the mechanics of writing a clear logical proposal, and develop procedures for preparing proposal needs statements, budgets, and all the other documentation needed to support a request for funds.

Perhaps most important, they work constantly to cultivate personal relationships with funders. In almost all instances where funding was obtained (even in supposedly neutral grant and contract competitions), there was some personal contact and relationship between the assistance group and the funding agency.

Diversify Sources

Another aspect of successful fund raising is a persistent effort to diversify funding sources. If an effective group obtains funding for a year or two, they use this period to explore other funding sources, rather than taking their temporary success as a sign they can relax. As one successful fund raiser said, "The harder we work, the luckier we get."

Negotiating Realistic Commitments with Funders

We found that less effective groups tend to accept serious limitations imposed by funders without question. They agree to unrealistic commitments, short funding periods, and deadlines that make no sense for their work. They go along when funders shift concerns in the middle of a project.

Of course, the ideas and priorities of funders create constraints on your group that cannot be ignored. However, we found that it is worth pressing funders about these constraints. Often when you do, you find that funders are open to adjusting their procedures and do not have strong reasons for them. It is worth the struggle to make realistic plans and timetables in applying for funds, to press for long-term rather than short-term funding, and to plan the ends of funding cycles to coincide with natural bench marks in your work.

Look at Yourself — How Can Your Fund Raising Be Improved?

In this exercise, we ask you to prepare a chronology of your funding and use it to reflect on how well you incorporate the tasks that we found critical into your own fund raising.

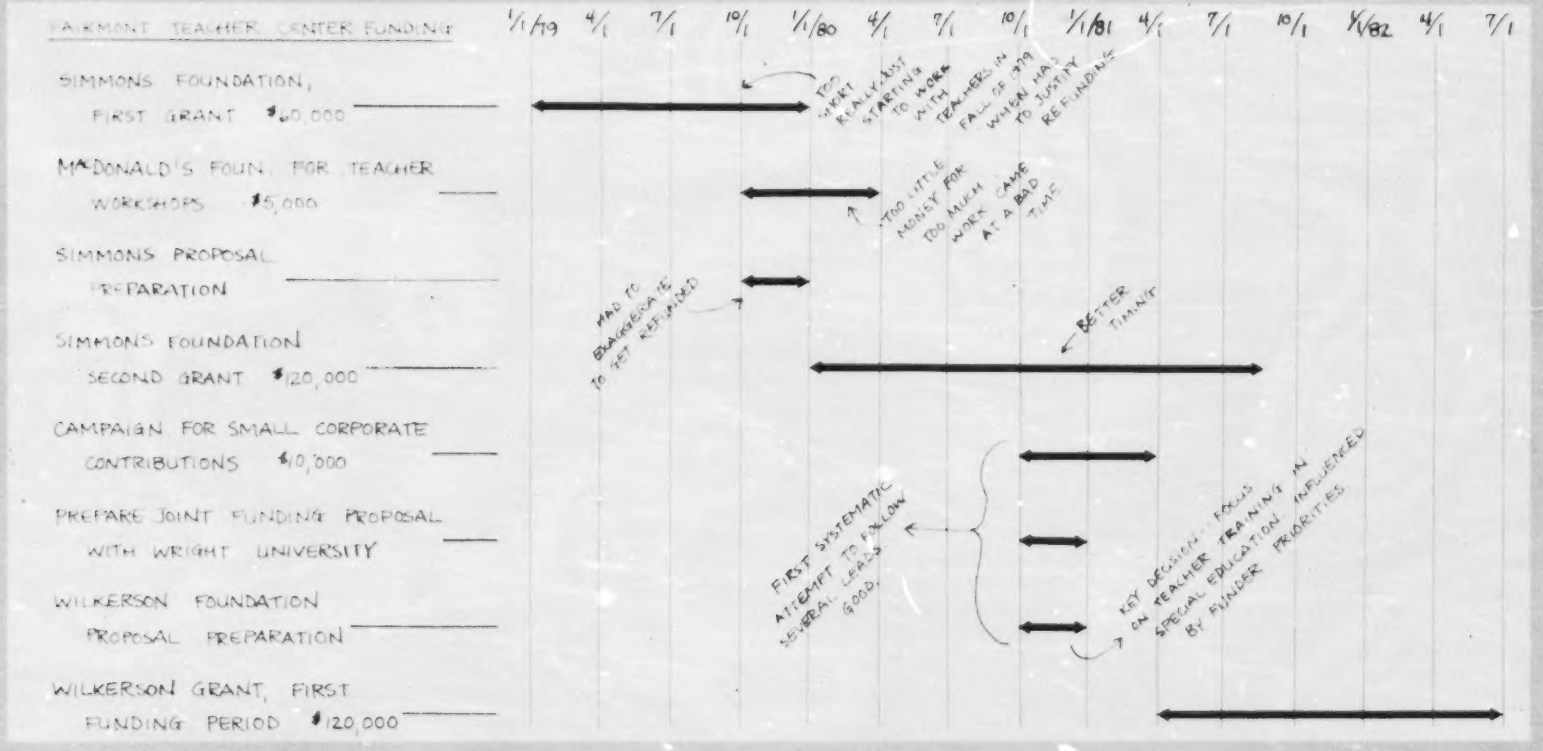
How Can Your Fund Raising Be Improved?

1. Have the person most knowledgeable about your fund raising prepare a chart like the one below, indicating the timing of major events in your history relevant to funding. Notes on the chart should show where problems arose or things went well.

2. In a group meeting, ask this person to explain major events and issues in your fund-raising history using the chart.

3. Use the Rate Yourself exercise at the beginning of this section to evaluate your past fund-raising activities and pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

4. Decide on two or three specific steps you can take to improve your fund-raising efforts and make plans to carry them out.


FAIRMONT TEACHER CENTER FUNDING
1/1/79
4/1
7/1
10/1
1/1/80
4/1
7/1
10/1
1/1/81
4/1
7/1
10/1
1/1/82
4/1
7/1
SIMMONS FOUNDATION, FIRST GRANT $40,000
TOO LITTLE REALLY JUST STARTING TO WORK WITH TEACHERS IN FALL OF '79 WHEN HAD TO JUSTIFY REFUNDING
MacDONALD'S FOUN. FOR TEACHER WORKSHOPS $5,000
TOO LITTLE MONEY FOR TOO MUCH WORK CAME AT A BAD TIME
SIMMONS PROPOSAL PREPARATION
HAD TO BRAGGERIZE TO GET REFUNDED
SIMMONS FOUNDATION SECOND GRANT $120,000
BETTER TIMING
CAMPAIGN FOR SMALL CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS $10,000
PREPARE JOINT FUNDING PROPOSAL WITH WRIGHT UNIVERSITY
FIRST SYSTEMATIC ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW SEVERAL LEADS GOOD.
KEY DECISION: FOCUS ON TEACHER TRAINING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION INFLUENCED BY FUNDER PRIORITIES.
WILKERSON FOUNDATION PROPOSAL PREPARATION
WILKERSON GRANT, FIRST FUNDING PERIOD $120,000

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THE PIECES OF THE PUZZLE: 86 CRITICAL TASKS

PUZZLE SECTION 1:
FORMING THE ASSISTANCE GROUP
(rate yourself on page 41)

1-1. initial strategy provides focus
1-2. strong leadership
1-3. core staff
1-4. initial funds for about three years
1-5. initial clients
1-6. resource network

PUZZLE SECTION 2:
LEADING AND MANAGING THE ASSISTANCE GROUP
(rate yourself on page 48)

2-1. strong leadership
2-2. management skills
2-3. work teams with skilled leaders
2-4. balancing coordination and independence
2-5. headquarters versus field staff
2-6. work team size
2-7. clarifying jobs
2-8. work overload
2-9. dividing responsibility for decision making
2-10. creative decision-making techniques
2-11. selecting staff
2-12. training staff
2-13. monitoring and supervising work
2-14. group commitment
2-15. internal communication
2-16. resource network
2-17. geography problems
2-18. changes in staff size
2-19. technical skills
2-20. routine administrative and clerical work
2-21. increasing administrative support
2-22. clear personnel policies

PUZZLE SECTION 3:
REFINING A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY
(rate yourself on page 74)

3-1. focus on refining a strategy
3-2. cycle of assistance and analysis
3-3. initial period of direct assistance
3-4. conscious shared strategy
3-5. second period of direct assistance
3-6. leadership interprets strategy
3-7. human systems perspective
3-8. central aspects of human systems
3-9. focused strategy
3-10. school principal is key
3-11. insiders or outsiders
3-12. adjusting to local situations
3-13. clear language for key ideas
3-14. flexible materials

PUZZLE SECTION 4:
DEVELOPING THE ADVISOR'S ROLE
(rate yourself on page 98)

4-1. defining the advisor's job
4-2. advisor's style
4-3. personal relationships with clients
4-4. hiring advisors
4-5. training advisors
4-6. avoiding advisor isolation

PUZZLE SECTION 5:
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS
(rate yourself on page 110)

5-1. taking key people and groups into account
5-2. understanding local history
5-3. shaping initial meetings
5-4. building credibility and trust
5-5. nature and limits of help
5-6. needs assessment
5-7. match with client's situation
5-8. agreements on mutual responsibilities

PUZZLE SECTION 6:
PROVIDING ASSISTANCE
(rate yourself on page 125)

6-1. blending five assistance methods
6-2. doing things for clients
6-3. blending process skills with substance
6-4. concrete help
6-5. critical mass among clients
6-6. broad network of support
6-7. encouraging independent action
6-8. emphasizing skill development
6-9. broadening client group leadership
6-10. client mapping skills
6-11. cycle of analysis and action
6-12. clients become trainers
6-13. making clients conscious of progress
6-14. building a vision
6-15. internalizing a standard
6-16. part of a movement
6-17. emotional breakthrough
6-18. collaboration among client groups
6-19. long-term advisory help

PUZZLE SECTION 7:
RAISING FUNDS
(rate yourself on page 144)

7-1. regular emphasis
7-2. diversify sources
7-3. writing skills
7-4. adjusting to funder priorities
7-5. realistic commitments
7-6. pressing for long-term funding
7-7. using natural bench marks
7-8. funders' shifting expectations
7-9. documenting assistance work
7-10. initial funds for about three years
7-11. funds for an additional three years

A WORD OF THANKS

We hope that assistance groups across the country can profit from our analysis of the experiences of some of their predecessors. If you do, the four years of effort that went into this study will be justified.

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The principal writer for this handbook was Donald Moore. Kathy Blair developed the handbook's design and also contributed to its substance. Carol Taylor played an important role in planning and carrying out the book's design. Jean Newcomer did the handwritten parts of the exercises. Mary O'Connell edited the text. Sylvia Smith and Carol Robinson expertly typed the text in its complex format.

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Once again, we hope that the collective efforts of so many who have contributed to this project can be made useful in achieving the goal to which all those studied devote so much energy -- improving the quality of school experiences for children.